Community Constructed

Participatory Design-Build in Lower Los Angeles River Communities

606 Studio

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Department of Landscape Architecture • College of Environmental Design

PL 375

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study region from Maywood to the Rio Hondo confluence is flanked by heavy industry and dense residential neighorhoods.

Introduction

The Los Angeles River helped give life to a metropolitan region which is home to 15 million people. Today, attention has turned back to the river as many residents and leaders have recognized the river's potential to provide open space and an attractive green context for development. A great deal of this attention has come in the form of large scale master plans which seek to revitalize significant portions of the river with large scale multi-benefit projects that combine ecology, recreation, flood control, and real estate development.

This project starts in a different place physically, methodologically and philosophically. It focuses on a portion of the Los Angeles River that until now has received little attention during revitalization efforts, has limited accessible parks and open spaces, is highly dense, and whose residents are predominantly Latino and low-income. This specific study region in southern Los Angeles County reaches from the City of Maywood south to the Rio Hondo confluence.

Rather than plan the entire area, students from the 606 Studio at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona collaborated with local community members to design and build improvement projects in neighborhoods in this region. These projects demonstrate an alternative way to begin improving river adjacent communities and the river itself. They explore the potential of starting in the neighborhood by creating immediate, low budget improvements. Together, residents and students designed and built projects that immediately improved the communities, and which set a foundation for these communities and their residents to influence, shape, and design larger future improvements along the LA River.

Neighborhood Selection

This project focuses on river adjacent communities within a half-mile of the Los Angeles River, and includes the communities of Maywood, Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, and South Gate (see Map ES1). In this region the river is bordered by heavy industry, transportation corridors, and dense residential development. It is bisected by the I-710 freeway which parallels the river, cutting many communities off from the river's potential amenities.

Communities in the study region adjacent to the river have limited parks and open spaces due to higher land use density and unequal distribution of recreation spaces. The study region is also greatly impacted by polluted runoff during rain events, compared to other communities north and east of downtown Los Angeles.

In the study region, 30% of the population is non-English speaking which is a challenge for communication. The region is also characterized by low educational attainment. It has a high rate of poverty with 59.6% of the population living below the poverty line. Similarly, unemployment in this region is higher than other parts of the county.

While the whole region would benefit from intensive participatory design processes, to perform impactful work, the 606 Studio had to choose a small number of neighborhoods. To select these neighborhoods from the many underserved communities in the area, the students developed a list of carefully selected criteria. The 606 Studio split into three project teams to investigate the study area and identify potential neighborhoods through a five stage process.

STAGE 1 Preliminary investigation of large unused vacant lots (by the 606 Studio)

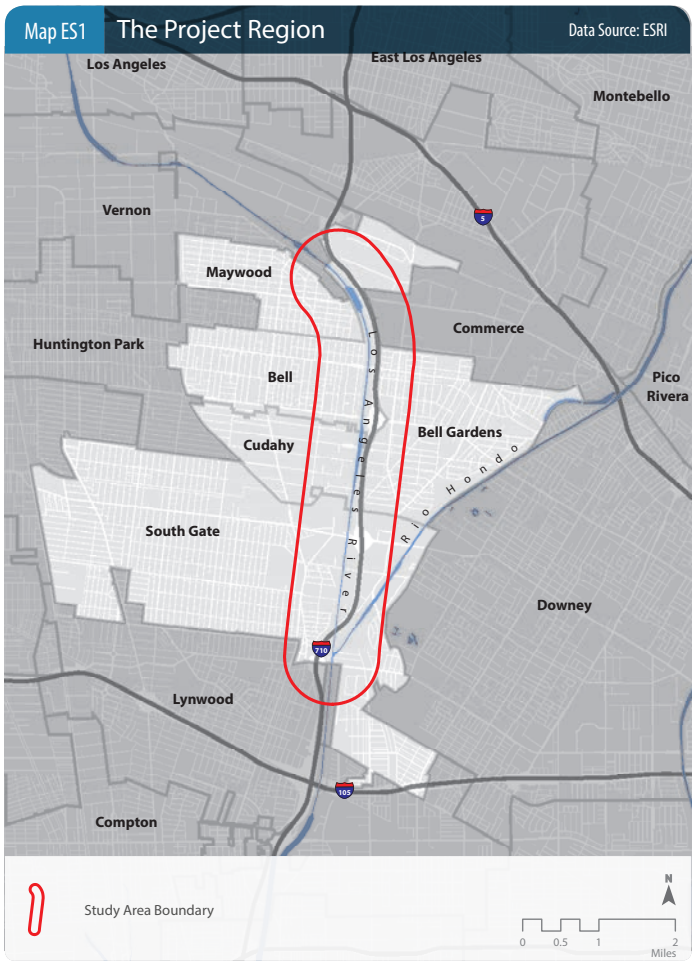
STAGE 2 Investigation of neighborhoods with unused open available land (by the 606 Studio)

STAGE 3 Investigation of neighborhoods with unused open available land and specific neighborhood characteristics (by the 606 Studio)

STAGE 4 Identification and evaluation of 12 potential neighborhoods (by each project team)

STAGE 5 Development of final selection criteria and selection of final neighborhoods (by each project team)

The 606 Studio selected three final project neighborhoods, one for each project team—Bell del Río (Bell), La Santana (Cudahy) and Thunderbird Villa (South Gate).



Methods

Throughout the project, teams employed a variety of methods that allowed them to gather information from many sources, and engage with communities in a participatory process that highlighted the local knowledge, expertise, and needs of local residents. The following methods were employed and adapted by all the teams during various phases of the project:

- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Data mining
- Interviews
- Field observations
- Canvassing
- Steering committee meetings
- Community Meetings
- Site selection walks
- Design workshops
- Work days

Bell del Río Neighborhood

The Bell del Río neighborhood is located in the City of Bell, a 2.8 square mile city in Los Angeles County 10 miles south of downtown Los Angeles. Land use patterns divide the city into two distinct parts: the residential and commercial core in the south of the city to the west of the river, and the heavily industrialized zone in the north of the city on the eastern side of the river.

The boundaries of the Bell del Río neighborhood are Pala Avenue to the west, Randolph Street to the north, and Filmore Street and Gage Avenue to the south. The Los Angeles River sits behind a seven-foot high levee wall adjacent to River Drive, defining the neighborhood's eastern boundary.

Bell del Río is predominantly working class Latino and the area is a quiet neighborhood with limited park access. The neighborhood is a culturally expressive place, where the residents express their cultural identity through elaborate front yard decor, vibrant colors, and culturally significant plant materials. The residents use their front yard and the Los Angeles River Bike Path as their prime recreational resources. Although some residents perceive the Los Angeles River Bike Path and the railway right-of-way as unsafe, for many residents it is their favorite and only location for outdoor recreation.

The intersection of Walker Avenue and Randolph Street is an area favored by motorists for speeding. This poses a significant safety threat to the community as pedestrians use the street as a main access point to the Los Angeles River. The residents felt the need to install speed bumps and stop signs for traffic calming measures.

Site Selection

The project team employed canvassing, steering committee meetings, and community meetings to facilitate the site selection process. The meetings employed open discussions, a site selection walk, and mapping exercises; the project team also prepared a presentation package including photos of sample projects using sidewalks, streets, intersections, empty lots, and remnant open spaces as sites to encourage discussion. Three project sites were short-listed, and eventually Randolph Street became the location of the build project.

Program

The project's program was determined over several community and steering committee meetings using techniques such as brainstorming, open discussions, and comparative exercises.

The project team and community members walk the neighborhood to identify potential site locations.

Community members share their vision for the project and the neighborhood.

Design

The project team developed designs with the community and then presented several alternative designs to city staff. At the end of negotiations, only the mural and painted play areas were approved for construction.The community requested a pattern that represented nature and incorporated vibrant colors that reflected the working-class Latino character of the community such as red, yellow, blue, green, and orange. The project team utilized a mural design that was created by a community member during a previous design workshop. The mural pattern proposed was simple, used vibrant colors representing the community, and could be painted by untrained community members.

The design phase culminated with the design of the murals at the intersections of Randolph Street with Walker, Home, Casitas Avenues, and River Drive. These murals perform the function of traffic calming by drawing attention to the intersections with bright and colorful floral designs.

Build

Community members swept the ground clean of debris while city staff used blowers to clear away excess dirt. The design was sketched onto the pavement using a stencil, chalk, and spray paint. Each section within the outline was sprayed with a sample of the color to be eventually filled in by a community member. With consistent and enthusiastic community support from all ages, the four murals were successfully completed over the course of three Saturdays.

Long-Term Project

While the built project addressed the neighborhood's short-term needs for traffic calming, a larger project is needed to bring in more fundamental and positive change to the environmental and social setting of Bell del Río.

On April 23, 2016, the project team conducted a workshop to facilitate community involvement in the long-term project. During the meeting, the community was reintroduced to the river access point, a site that was chosen by the community as a potential project location during the earlier design-build phase. This project addresses the community's need for enhanced environmental quality and multi-functional open space as well as provides passive recreation opportunities at the neighborhood's access point to the Los Angeles River.

Community members draw mural designs at the first design workshop.

The project team and community paint the site murals.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

La Santana Neighborhood

This project neighborhood is situated in Cudahy, California, a small but densely populated city located in central Los Angeles County south of downtown. Urban form in the neighborhood is characterized by long rows of apartments extending roughly 400 feet from Santa Ana Street and Elizabeth Street, creating sub-communities inside the larger neighborhood. The Los Angeles River is accessible via two ramps located along River Road, one of which sits behind Cudahy Park, and the second of which sits slightly to the north of the neighborhood across River Road from Cudahy River Park.

Ethnically the neighborhood is 96% Hispanic, with the remaining population being split almost evenly between white and African-American residents (OEHHA, 2014; American Community Survey, 2014). Economically the neighborhood is working class, and roughly 63% of residents live below twice the federal poverty level (American Community Survey, 2014; OEHHA, 2014).

Inventory results reveal a portrait of a neighborhood marred by the fear of crime and hurt by political corruption. Yet it is also a neighborhood with the optimism to elect one of the youngest city councils in the county and to organize efforts to improve the neighborhood and finds value in the bare concrete street corner between a carniceria and laundromat.

Site Selection

The project team, steering committee members, and community members conducted site selection walks of the neighborhood. During the walks, the project team used open discussion and a mapping activity to foster a dialogue about the proximity of potential sites to areas that the committee felt were unsafe or undesirable. The preferred site, a paved area outside the neighborhood meat market at the intersection of Santa Ana Street and Wilcox Avenue, was chosen because of its relationship to the neighborhood, and because it is a place residents use often.

Program

Many elements of site programming happened simultaneously with site selection. A list of 13 different program items identified during steering committee and community meetings were prioritized by number of votes. The results of the final program were evaluated using open discussion.

Students and the project steering committee evaluate potential project sites around the neighborhood.

Steering committee members rank program elements using dotmocracy.

Design

The project was designed at a series of steering committee and community meetings. A mapping exercise consisted of a collaborative site analysis, where elements such as noise, sun, wind, and accessibility were visually placed on a prepared site plan. The project team discussed a number of design principles such as spatial proximity, prospect and refuge, and size relationships, using terminology that was clear to non-designers. Ready-made pieces were used by participants to represent their design ideas. Community members worked together in groups and openly discussed their ideas, arranging pieces on the base map collaboratively. After the series of meetings, the project team developed a final site plan, design details, and draft construction documents.

Eventually, as a result of city requirements, the project team also agreed to remove existing asphalt in an area between the parking wheel stops and the carniceria entrance. The use of infiltration trenches met the city's conditions, accommodated foot traffic, and increased stormwater permeability.

Build

The students and community prepped the site and painted the concrete vibrant colors chosen by the community. As site construction progressed, many curious shoppers and people passing by grew excited about the project and volunteered to help. Together, the project team and community constructed tree planter benches, a seating wall, succulent planters, a large tree planter bench, a shade structure planter bench, and planted trees and perennials.

To create the infiltration trenches in the parking lot as required by the city, the project team rented a walk-behind concrete saw and cut out four long strips of asphalt in the area behind the parking wheel stops. The team then filled the trenches with gravel and painted the asphalt between them in order to create a visual signal for pedestrians that the ground plane had changed. The project team and community also constructed small planters in the same style of the Plaza Milagro space and planted them with ground cover plants.

Long-Term Project

During the site selection and programming phases of the participatory design process, the community chose a site across from Park Avenue Elementary School for the long-term community design project. Although the project team did not have sufficient time or resources to design the site with the community because of the increased scope of construction required by the City of Cudahy, they set plans in motion and identified a project partner to implement this larger project within a few years.

Community members arrange ready-made design elements on a base map at the first design workshop.

The project team and community build a shade structure with an integrated planter and bench.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thunderbird Villa Neighborhood

The City of South Gate, California is located in southern Los Angeles County along the Los Angeles River. About 7 miles south of downtown Los Angeles, South Gate is set between the cities of Los Angeles and Downey to the east and west, and Cudahy and Paramount to the north and south. The project neighborhood, Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park, is a restricted 55+ community on the eastern bank of the river, in a primarily industrial neighborhood.

There is a strong sense of community and camaraderie among the residents, and many signs of care in the landscape. The neighbors take pride in their front yards and the neighborhood has strong curb appeal. The residents live in an area devoid of a park or a public open space area because the whole section of the city is still zoned as industrial. Thunderbird Villa's isolated population is non-Hispanic White, with only 26% Latino/Hispanic. Of Thunderbird Villa's 400 residents, only 6% live in poverty (city-data.com, 2016).

The Villa has an elongated circuit-like layout. Most of the homes are close together and face the internal streets. Any amenity has pedestrian access only through the use of streets since there are no sidewalks. The community often expressed fear of and resistance towards river connections, and preferred to look inward. Wildlife sightings and the potential presence of intruders suggested keeping access points and barriers gated and fenced, while also avoiding vegetation such as tall shrubs that could be used as hiding places, or plants that could attract bees.

Site Selection

The project team facilitated a site selection walk around the neighborhood. A list of potential sites was brainstormed during the first informational meeting. The project team presented the potential sites and the community confirmed the choice of the North Lot as their first choice. After discussing the North Lot project with the property owners, the project team decided to use that as their long-term project and move ahead with the North Recreation Hall and Frontage Road projects.

Program

The program for the potential sites was discussed at every meeting with the committee and community. At these meetings, residents brainstormed ideas, and following several open discussions, the top three choices for the site program were a dog park, walking trails, and planting beds and trees. The program evolved as community members matched it to specific sites.

Residents of Thunderbird Villa prepare for a site selection walk.

Residents and the project team discuss potential project sites.

Design

On Saturday, February 6, 2016, the first design workshop took place at the Thunderbird Recreation Room. The team facilitated a group site analysis then divided the residents into subgroups of two to three people. The groups were given ready made icons of outdoor furniture and plant material that could be taped to a base map. After each subgroup completed their design, they presented to the larger group and engaged in a discussion about their design intentions.

After a series of meetings, the team created a final site plan for the North Recreation Hall as well as construction documents that included details for each feature. Features included two shade structures, two tables with four chairs each, five benches, wooden planters, exercise equipment, and a gate for a dog area. A planting plan was also designed using drought-tolerant, native plants.

Build

With the final approval of the owners and property management of Thunderbird Villa, Team South Gate and community members began the build phase of the project. The initial weeks and weekends of the build process were focused on building furniture. This effort resulted in the construction and installation of furniture and a fence and two shade structures made from Douglas fir, which were sanded and then stained with redwood-colored transparent weather-proofing deck stain.

The project team worked with residents to develop a plant palette for the project that would bring color and fragrance to the space, but would also be low maintenance and drought tolerant. During the final weekends of the build process, residents worked with the project team to dig holes and plant and water dozens of plants including a variety of sage (*Salvia spp.*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus spp.)*, and bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spp.*) vines to climb perimeter walls and the shade structures.

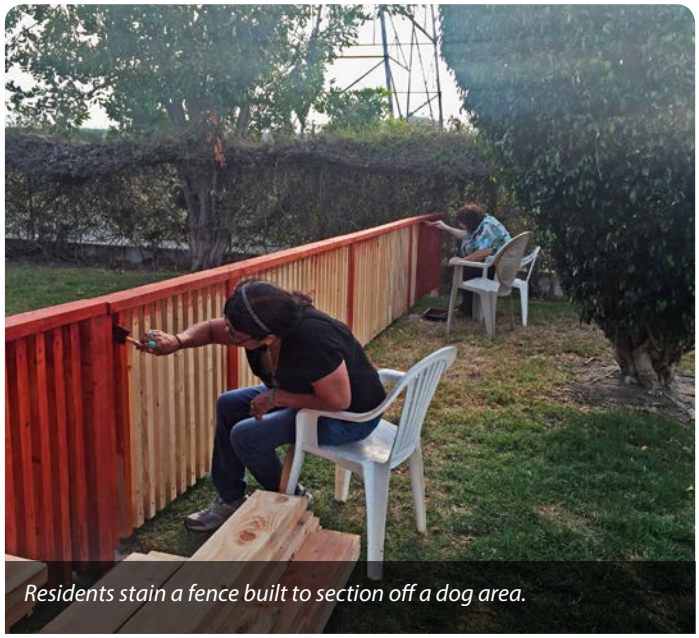
Long-Term Project

The team recruited a new partner organization to assist the community and created tools for the community and the partner to use in advocating for their project.

At community meetings, the residents were reintroduced to the four sites they chose as potential locations for improvements in the design-build phase. Members were divided into two groups and given a large base map of four project locations, then encouraged to design all four spaces.

The community expressed a desire for benches on Frontage Road, two-way streets with different pavement patterns, and a curbless sidewalk on one side of the internal streets and Frontage Road. The final schematic plans consist of designs for four sites: Frontage Road, LADWP power line right-of-way, the North Lot, and the internal streets of Thunderbird Villa.

Community members present their conceptual designs during a design workshop.



Residents stain a fence built to section off a dog area.

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to test the efficacy of participatory design-build process in disadvantaged, river-adjacent communities. The results speak for themselves. Over the course of nine months, through participatory design, the 606 team was able to build a small urban plaza in the empty space next to a butcher shop, create a community gathering space in a trailer park, and paint four street murals. Community members were deeply engaged throughout the process—recruiting new members, creating designs, selecting sites, swinging hammers, and advocating on behalf of the projects when faced with challenges. Taken as a whole, the success of these projects leaves little doubt as to the readiness of these communities to engage in participatory design.

yes, my dad is
awe
some

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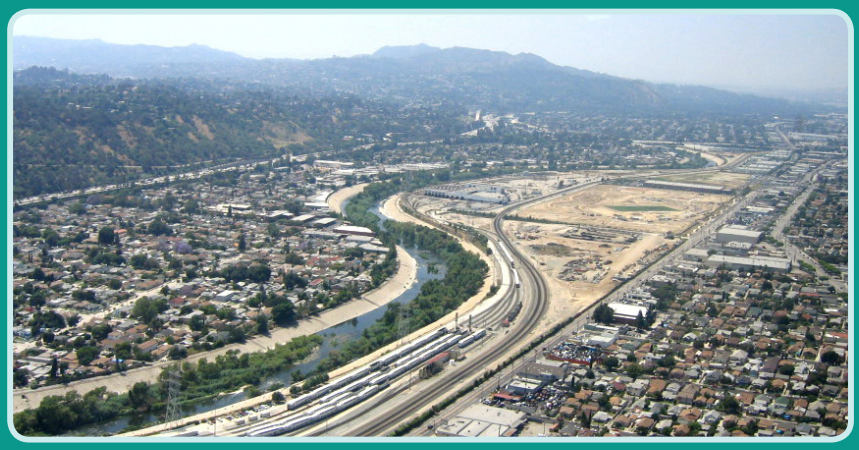
INTRODUCTION

An unpaved Los Angeles River meanders past rail yards in the Elysian Valley, 1940 (USC, 1940).

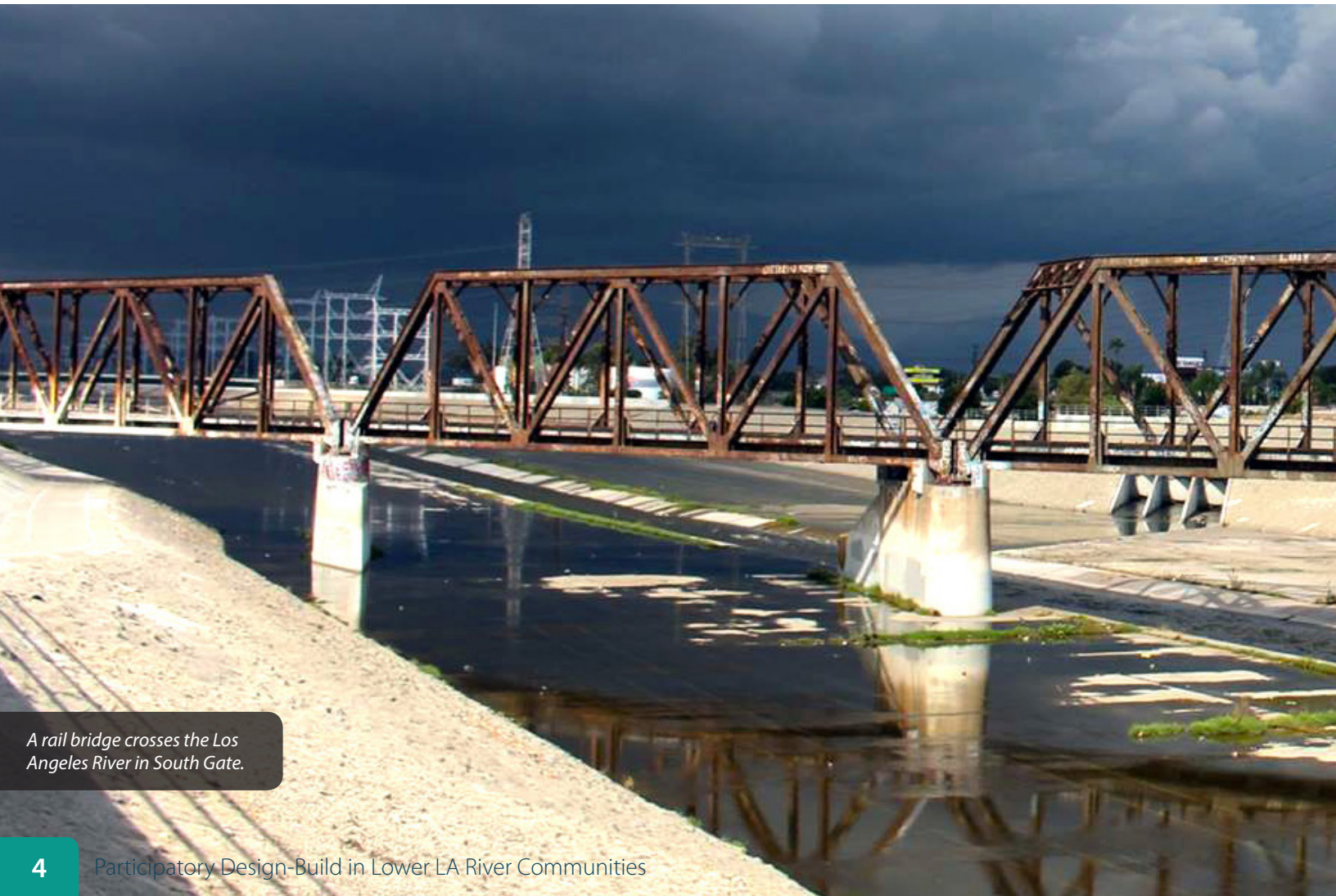


The Los Angeles River, partially paved, at the same location as the photo below, 2006.

Source: Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (City of Los Angeles)

The Los Angeles River helped give life to a metropolitan region which is home to 15 million people. As the urbanized core grew up and out it quickly turned its back to the river. Today, attention has returned to the river as many residents and leaders have developed an environmental consciousness and recognized the river's potential to provide open space and an attractive "green" context for development. A great deal of this attention has come in the form of large scale master plans which seek to revitalize significant portions of the river with large scale multi-benefit projects that combine ecology, recreation, flood control, and real estate development.

This project starts in a different place physically, methodologically and philosophically. It focuses on a portion of the Los Angeles River that until now has received little attention during revitalization efforts, and has limited accessible parks and open spaces, is highly dense, and whose residents are predominantly Latino and low-income. This specific study region in southern Los Angeles County reaches from the City of Maywood south to the Rio Hondo confluence. Rather than plan the entire area, students from the 606 Studio at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona collaborated with local community members to design and build improvement projects in neighborhoods in this region. These projects demonstrate an alternative way to begin improving river adjacent communities and the river itself. Rather than starting with a large scale, long-term, high budget master plan, these projects explore the potential of starting in the neighborhood creating immediate, low budget improvements. Together, residents and students designed and built projects that immediately improved the communities, and which set a foundation for these communities and their residents to influence, shape, and design larger future improvements along the Los Angeles River.



A rail bridge crosses the Los Angeles River in South Gate.

THE LOS ANGELES RIVER

1.1

Modern-day Los Angeles owes its location, as well as its early development and growth, to the Los Angeles River. The river was the main water source for the region's first residents, and later fueled the agriculture of European colonists (Grumprecht, 1999). As Los Angeles grew, its thirsty population outpaced the water resources of the river. As other sources of water were identified and connected to the growing city, the river corridor, its floodplain, and banks were used for other forms of development (Gandy, 2006). However, rivers are naturally unpredictable. Powerful storms can shift a river's course across the landscape with little warning, and floods can cause severe damage to human development efforts. Catastrophic floods and the dangers they posed to real estate interests and population expansion eventually led to the channelization of the river to protect property values and human life (Grumprecht, 1999). Beginning in the 1930s, the Army Corps of Engineers straightened and widened the river's channel in an attempt to reduce flood risks. Generally, they created trapezoidal or box cross sections with concrete bottoms and walls to move water quickly away from developed areas and to the ocean (LACDPW, 1996). While this often reduced flooding in the city, it significantly altered the riparian and floodplain ecology of the Los Angeles region and how people related to the river.

In some areas, river property was reserved as prime residential real estate. However in many parts of the city, the river functioned as a transportation corridor for trains and motor vehicles. As such, land adjacent to the river is often dominated by railroads, warehouses, and freeways. These land uses often form impenetrable barriers to the river. Hidden mostly from public consciousness, the river became a utilitarian concrete flood control channel, its

sole function to carry millions of gallons of urban runoff swiftly and efficiently to the Pacific Ocean Ocean. For many in Los Angeles, connection to the river was limited to views of the (often dry) concrete channel. Rather than an open space or natural resource, the concrete channel evokes images of industry, chase scenes, and drag races.

In the past few decades in Los Angeles, there has been a shift in societal attitudes towards the role of urban rivers—beginning most visibly with the formation of the Friends of the Los Angeles River in the 1980s (Grumprecht, 1999). Today, faced with dwindling aquifers, concerns over water quality, a lack of parks and open space, and an ever increasing demand for land, environmental organizations and city planners are looking critically at the potential of Los Angeles's concrete river and its associated landscape.

Master Plans for the River

The shift in attitude towards the river as a resource has led to the creation of a number of master plans for the river. Some plans are broad and ambitious, with the ultimate goal to create a Los Angeles River Greenway, designed with parks and open space strategically developed throughout the watershed. Other plans are more narrowly focused on practical development strategies along select reaches of the river corridor (see Figure 1.1).

Early plans, such as LA County's *Los Angeles River Master Plan* (LARMP) (LACDPW, 1996), focused broadly on the entire river channel. More recent efforts, such as the City of Los Angeles' *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan* (LARRMP) (LADPW, 2007) and the *Army Corps of Engineers Ecosystem Restoration Plan* (LARERP) (USACE, 2013), concentrate primarily on the river's northern reaches. The *Long Beach River Link Plan* (RLP) addresses areas in and around Los Angeles's southern boundaries (City of Long Beach, 2005). These revitalization efforts have often neglect the areas south of downtown Los Angeles and north of Long Beach. In this central area, the river is often fully concreted and surrounded by walls, levees, or fences. The focus of this project falls within this neglected area, specifically from Maywood to the Los Angeles River's confluence with the Rio Hondo. In the area between Rio Hondo and Maywood, the river is sandwiched between dense, working-class communities and the I-710 freeway. These communities are both park poor and economically disadvantaged. They also struggle to receive their fair share of private and public agency funding for open space projects. As such, until recently they have received few resources to plan, design or build public spaces associated with the river.

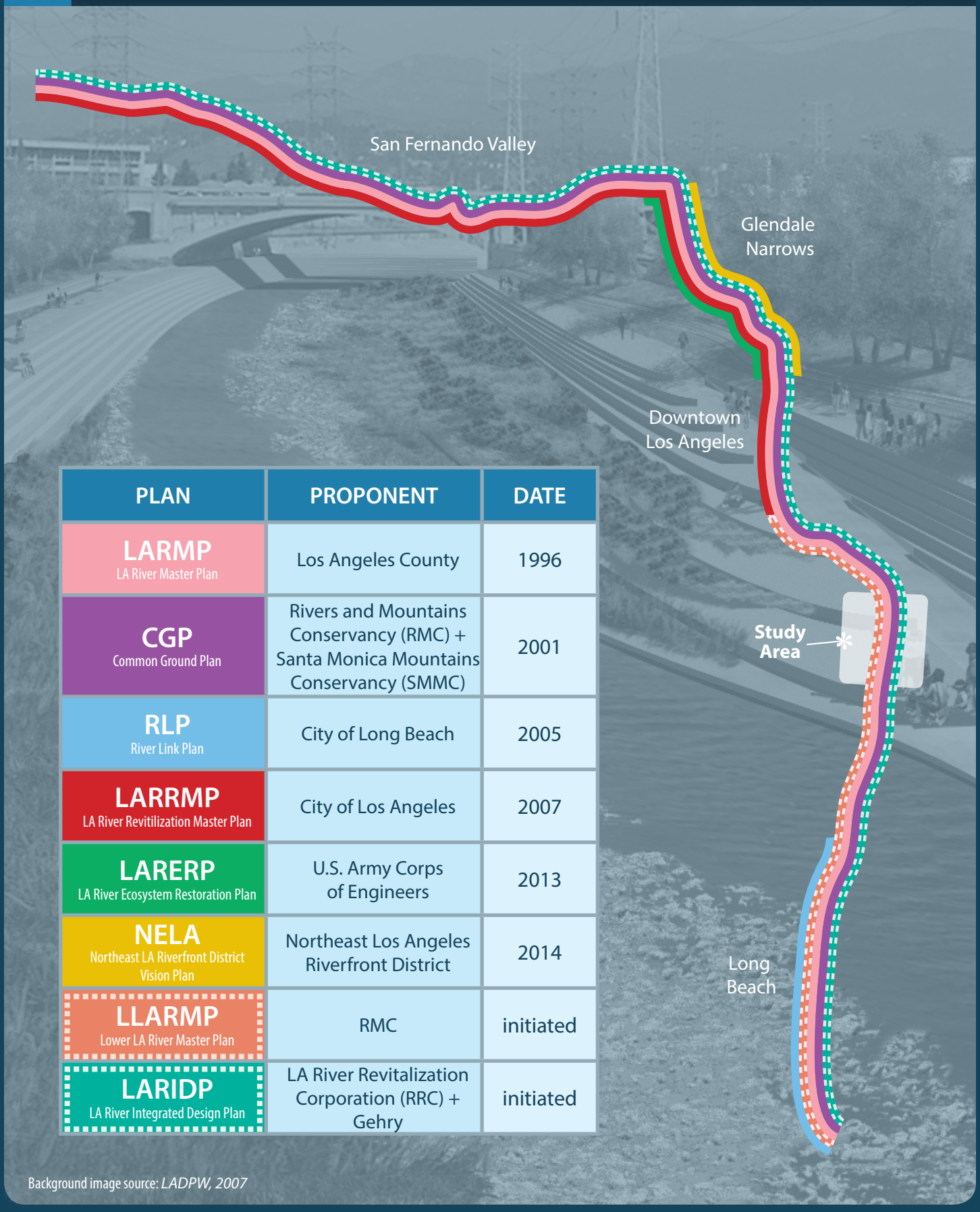
A conceptual rendering of LA River Revitalization (LAPDW, 2007).

Plans for the river communities between Rio Hondo and Maywood are in a state of flux. An updated revitalization plan will examine this part of the river, but it is still in the early stages. New interest in innovative strategies for the entire river channel have been getting attention, due in part to the recent involvement of architect Frank Gehry and the approval of the Army Corps of Engineers ecosystem restoration plan.

All of these efforts, however, are focused on large scale planning, and have yet to truly engage local community members in discussions about the role of the river in their communities and their needs for open space, natural and recreational resources. Rather, they are top down efforts which involve incomprehensible budgets, expect completion to unfold over decades, and are either market driven or intended to promote market growth.

The "Community Constructed" project addressed these issues of scale, timeline, budget, and project initiation by developing community partners to identify, plan, design and build immediate improvements in their river adjacent neighborhoods. These efforts sought to build local capacity for future river planning and engage local residents in a discussion about the river, their relationship to it, and their desires for local open space resources.

Figure 1.1 Los Angeles River Master Plans



PLAN	PROPONENT	DATE
LARMP LA River Master Plan	Los Angeles County	1996
CGP Common Ground Plan	Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) + Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC)	2001
RLP River Link Plan	City of Long Beach	2005
LARRMP LA River Revitilization Master Plan	City of Los Angeles	2007
LARERP LA River Ecosystem Restoration Plan	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	2013
NELA Northeast LA Riverfront District Vision Plan	Northeast Los Angeles Riverfront District	2014
LLARMP Lower LA River Master Plan	RMC	initiated
LARIDP LA River Integrated Design Plan	LA River Revitalization Corporation (RRC) + Gehry	initiated

Background image source: *LADPW, 2007*

Between Maywood and the Rio Hondo the Los Angeles River is bordered by the I-710 freeway, industry, and residential communities (Google, 2016).

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

1.2

GOAL

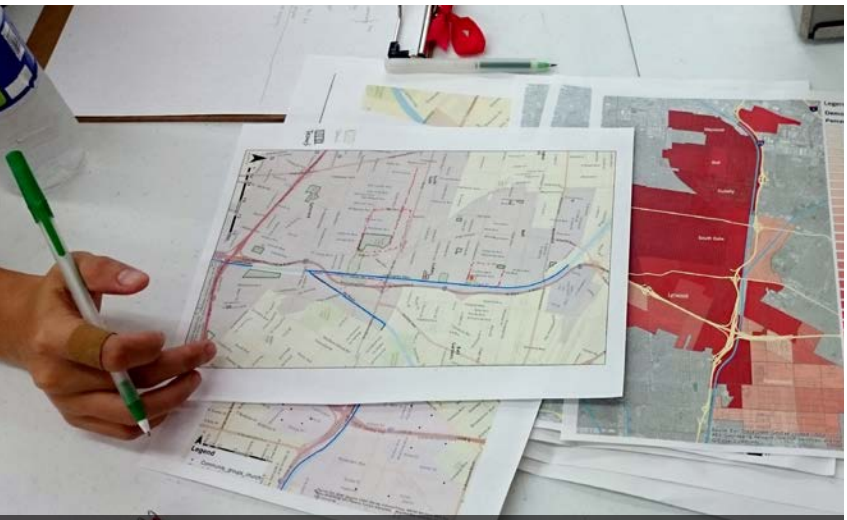
To explore the assertion that participatory design-build projects can engage and serve low-income river adjacent communities, in order to provide a complement and alternative to current traditional master planning.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore and demonstrate, through participatory design methods, the effectiveness of community based approaches along the Los Angeles River;
2. Develop organized and informed community leadership focused on community and landscape improvements;
3. Design and build immediate and inexpensive improvements using participatory design approaches;
4. Develop community capacity and confidence;
5. Improve quality of life in project neighborhoods;
6. Use the resulting momentum in project neighborhoods to identify and design larger scale, but still implementable, projects;
7. Use the process to increase local awareness of the river and the environment starting from the residents' perspective of what already impacts their daily lives;
8. Build a base of informed participants to represent their communities in the development of future multi-benefit projects along the Los Angeles River.

606 STUDIO

1.3



Students and instructors discuss the design process in the 606 Studio.

The 606 Studio is the capstone of the landscape architecture graduate program at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. The 606 Studio has over 35 years of award-winning work helping municipalities, NGOs, community organizations, and other agencies to solve complex relationships between human and natural systems. 606 Studio projects apply advanced methods of analysis and design to address significant issues concerning resources and both the physical and social environment, with broad implications that go beyond project site boundaries.

What Makes This Project Distinct?

While previous 606 Studio projects have focused on large-scale vision planning, this project engages local communities and stakeholders in both revisioning and beginning to build the future of the river corridor at a neighborhood scale. At this more focused scale, rather than developing broad conceptual designs and typologies, the 606 Studio designed and built site specific improvements with river adjacent communities. The 606 Studio collaborated directly with local residents, using participatory design methods to understand, analyze, and address issues of open space and environmental justice that affect the day-to-day lives of people in these under-served river communities.

METHODS

1.4

Complex "wicked" problems dominate urban environments (Rittel and Webber, 1973). They are hard to define, have many partial solutions and every situation is unique. Making decisions related to wicked problems requires customized research methods, triangulation, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Throughout the project, teams employed a variety of methods which allowed them to gather information from many sources, and engage with communities in a participatory process that highlighted the knowledge, expertise and needs of local residents. The following methods were employed and adapted by all the teams during various phases of the project.

Geographic Information System (GIS)

GIS technology was utilized at both the regional and neighborhood levels during the investigation and analysis processes of the project. At the regional level, the 606 Studio team employed a GIS-based landscape representation model to map and analyze the study area in comparison to the larger region of Los Angeles County, with the goal of better understanding the project area's unique social, cultural, and environmental characteristics. Data was integrated in desktop GIS from multiple public data sources such as the Los Angeles County GIS Data Portal, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the U.S. Census 2010, the California Protected Areas Data Portal and other public sources.

The 606 Studio team used GIS to examine spatial patterns related to socioeconomic inventory such as income, unemployment, poverty, education, linguistic isolation, and ethnicity. In completing an environmental analysis of the region, the team examined issues such as the prevalence of hazardous substance cleanup sites, traffic patterns, particulate matter concentrations, and park accessibility (see Chapter Three: The Region, for mapping results). These environmental metrics were computed by the OEHHA for the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen Version 2.0) and the team mapped patterns based on the results of OEHHA analysis. Descriptive statistics and metrics were generated from these data sources for both the project area and wider region for the purpose of comparison. For instance, the 606 team mapped the prevalence of adults over 25 years of age who had obtained less than a high school degree at the study area, county, and state levels, using data obtained from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

In order to examine park poverty and access, the 606 Studio team produced a park access map (see Map 3.12) utilizing population data from the 2010 U.S. Census and park facilities data from the California Protected Areas Data Portal. The park access map measures the available park acreage per thousand residents within a quarter mile for every census tract in Los Angeles County.

At the neighborhood level, GIS analysis techniques were employed to integrate public data with community data that the neighborhood teams collected throughout the participatory design process. By utilizing GIS techniques to analyze community input, teams were able to better examine patterns that emerged from community feedback related to issues such as perceived safety, pedestrian trends, and favorite locations within the neighborhood. Neighborhood teams examined data from formal sources such as the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, U.S. Census, and Transportation Injury Mapping System. However, this data was frequently incompatible with neighborhood analysis due to its coarse resolution, lack of coverage in certain areas, and lack of reporting of crime and accidents. Additionally, this data did not contribute to an understanding of how these issues were perceived or experienced by neighborhood residents. By utilizing community input in mapping, teams were able to integrate data that would have been inaccessible from formal sources.

During community and steering committee meetings, community members were given hard copy aerial base maps of their neighborhoods and asked to map their common walking routes, favorite neighborhood places, and locations where they felt unsafe. Following these

meetings, this data was translated into digital formats in desktop GIS. When the participatory mapping exercises resulted in point data, such as favorite neighborhood locations, a kernel density analysis was performed to demonstrate the changing prevalence throughout the neighborhood. In instances where the exercises resulted in line data, as was the case when assessing local walking routes, each user's recorded route was digitized and the number of users of a given road or trail segment were analyzed, allowing students to count the number of users for each segment. The resulting maps were printed, discussed and analyzed with committee members in subsequent meetings, and considered prior to making decisions related to site selection and programming. Results of this effort are demonstrated and discussed in chapters five through seven.

Some of the questions teams looked to answer using GIS were:

- What are the demographics of the project neighborhood, and how do they compare to the region?
- What are the land use characteristics of the project neighborhood, and how do they compare to the region?
- What issues of safety and security affect the project neighborhood, and how do they compare to the region?
- What is the level of access to parks in the project neighborhood?
- Where are there opportunities to increase parks, open spaces, community amenities, and recreational spaces?
- How does the project neighborhood relate to the river?
- What are the geographic boundaries or barriers around the project neighborhood?

Data Mining

Data mining was used during the inventory phase to gain a better understanding of the project neighborhood. While the majority of information was collected using GIS databases, data mining of other sources supplemented GIS information. Data mining included the use of government documents and websites, research by subject matter experts, and a variety of quality non-academic resources. Data mining is the process of sifting through available information until relevant information by a credible source is found. The project team used internet sources as the primary resources for the data mining process.

Questions asked during data mining included:

- What is the history of the project neighborhood and how does it fit into broader city and regional histories?
- Who are important actors and stakeholders connected to the neighborhood?
- What is the political context of the neighborhood within the city and region?
- What are past and current projects that impact the neighborhood?

Interviews

Formal interviews were used to gather information about the selected communities and the local context of the project neighborhoods. Student teams called and scheduled meetings with a variety of people who represented local stakeholders, local government officials, and interested non-profit groups. Students prepared a selection of questions related to the specific characteristics of the project neighborhoods to guide the interview process. Interviews were primarily held in-person at the office of interviewees, though some were held by telephone. For additional information on who was interviewed, how, and why, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

Field Observations

Field observations were used throughout the project to gather information about the community and its physical environment while spending time there. Using direct observation and interactions with the community, teams documented trends and patterns to better understand the community. For additional information on the implementation of this method, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

Canvassing

Canvassing consisted of door-to-door outreach to homes and apartments in project neighborhoods. Teams included translators when they needed assistance speaking Spanish. Bilingual flyers were used to introduce the project to residents. The goal of this approach was to meet residents, to explain the project, and to gather the names and contact information of community members who had

interest in being a part of a leadership steering committee. For additional information on the implementation of this method, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

Steering Committee Meetings

The steering committee was the lead group of community members in each project neighborhood who had volunteered or been selected. Steering committee members were selected because of enthusiasm and commitment, to help create a more representative or diverse committee, or because of a specific skill which they brought to the project. These steering committee members took leading advisory roles in the project, and acted as representatives of their broader community. Steering committee meetings were gatherings of the student project teams and steering committee members. Steering committee meetings were used to answer specific questions during many phases of the project. In general, the team employed steering committee meetings to prepare for the community meetings and train committee members for their leadership role in organizing future meetings for the project. During these meetings, students and residents engaged in open discussion, brainstorming, mapping exercises, comparative exercises, ranking exercises, and training. For additional information on this method, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

Community Meetings

Community meetings included members of the steering committee and members of the larger community who were not members of the steering committee. Throughout the project, student teams employed community meetings to interact with residents of the project neighborhood. Community meetings were held at a variety of public locations and all members of the project neighborhood were invited. Student teams designed community meetings to address specific questions with the intent of collecting and sharing information and making community decisions. For additional information on this method, see the “Application of Methods” section of each project neighborhood.

Site Selection Walks

The project teams held site selection walks to explore locations for the community improvement projects. Teams invited members of the community to assemble on weekend mornings to walk the project neighborhoods and respond to experiential questions. During these walks, residents and student teams identified and evaluated potential sites. Residents were engaged in open discussion, brainstorming, training, mapping exercises, and comparative exercises. Site selection walks addressed questions related to neighborhood issues and potential solutions. For additional information on the implementation of this method, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

Design Workshops

Design workshops explored improvements to selected project sites. After the selection of project sites the community and steering committee members attended design workshops and were given the opportunity to explore and articulate how they wanted to improve the project site. Community members had previously identified programming which would improve their site. With this programming in mind, residents engaged in design exercises which allowed them to design on large basemaps of their selected sites. Design workshops engaged residents in mapping and site design exercises with the intent of developing conceptual designs for the community design-build project. For additional information on the this method, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

Work Days

To implement the designs developed by residents and student teams, work days were held during which community and committee members joined students on site to prepare and build the community design-build project. These work days had tangible outcomes such as built and painted elements, but also produced intangible outcomes such as community connections and acquired skills. For additional information on this method, see sections 5.2, 6.2, and 7.2.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Residents of Cudahy, California participate in a cognitive mapping exercise to define their neighborhood and its extent.

WHY PARTICIPATORY DESIGN?

2.1

Across scales, municipalities and regional entities have embraced master planning and vision planning as tools to outline goals and strategies for future projects. While these plans have proven to be effective in developing frameworks and momentum for large scale projects, they can at times forget the smallest scale—the people in the affected communities. Along the Los Angeles River, many river revitalization planning efforts have taken a very macro approach, often focusing on the system as a whole, at the expense of some of the existing components of the system—the residents of river adjacent neighborhoods. This project seeks to engage a participatory design-build process that works from the bottom up, improving quality of life and river connections around the Los Angeles River.

Traditionally, large scale river master planning has focused on landscape improvements of a specific type. These projects begin from a contemporary environmental perspective which is not commonly held in low income river communities. Additionally, these projects tend to have long time horizons (10 to 20 years or more), which are well outside the focus and attention of most communities. These large scale river projects require multi-million dollar funding and are often intended to promote market driven development which can directly hurt low income communities (LADPW, 2007).

Conversely, projects which utilize a participatory design-build approach tend to focus on improvements which start with local residents and their priorities for improving their neighborhood. These community-led projects are more amenable to short time horizons (3 to 6 months), which are more in line with the immediate needs of low income families. Unlike the millions of dollars required for river master planning, these projects can require just hundreds or several thousand dollars—an amount well within the reach of grassroots fundraising. Finally, participatory processes are intended to be catalyzed by and catalyze further community volunteer-led efforts to improve the neighborhood, which ultimately better serves low income residents.

Realizing the advantages of participatory design-build processes requires skillful application of participatory design approaches, techniques, tools and methods. This application must enable the community to define the project and its priorities. It is also necessary for these projects to be set at a very local scale—the "neighborhood"—as defined by residents. Lastly, the project needs to be completed over the course of months, rather than years.

Students and faculty discuss the participatory design process used during design workshops.

WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY DESIGN?

2.2

For over half a century, participatory design has been an evolving concept in the realm of environmental design and community development (Hester, 1989). It arose as a response to exploitative practices in community planning that did not consider the negative consequences for disenfranchised minority populations (Hou & Rios, 2003). Previously, civic professionals made critical decisions without any community input. Involving the community in the design process was initially a radical political act, as it sought citizen empowerment and democratization within a system with clear power imbalances (White, 1996). Today, however, citizen participation of some type has become integrated into nearly every project or process that environmental design professionals undertake in the public sphere (Jones, 1999).

Broadly, participatory design is a method by which local community knowledge and expertise is called upon to shape design decisions that will directly affect that community. Often, this takes the form of a series of workshops that gather community input at each stage of the design process. At other times the process brings residents out into the field to identify important characteristics of their community and/or issues and needs that an improvement project might address (Cancian, 2015).

Participatory design can involve a variety of processes by which a designer or planning expert engages the public to better achieve a common design goal (Toker, 2007). In some instances that goal is community empowerment; other times it is advocacy of or for an oppressed public who lack a voice (Davidoff, 1965; Hester, 1989). Frequently, public participation—in the name of participatory design—is used to manipulate citizens and acquire a rubber stamp of approval from a bureaucracy or political system (Arnstein, 1969). Often the citizenry remains disengaged because of the approach chosen for engagement.

Because several methods of public participation have become bureaucratized, their usefulness is threatened by the perception that they have become ineffective, procedural, or manipulative (Innes & Booher, 2004). Despite this reality, there remains a broad consensus that public participation is an essential part of the design process (Jaurez & Brown, 1999). The degree to which public participation can effect change and truly represent the needs and desires of communities is highly variable across approaches, methods, and techniques. The key determining factor of how a participatory design or public participation process evolves is a motivating goal (Melcher, 2013; Francis, 1999; Abendroth, 2015). Effective participatory design requires honest reflection by design professionals, aligning their goals and objectives with thoughtful participatory processes.

History

The character of cities and communities is strongly influenced by their history and the factors that impact their form at a variety of scales. At different times throughout history, small groups of people have had significant impact on their communities through small scale interventions, societal expectations, management, and maintenance (Milgrom, 2003). On the larger scale, often monarchical or authoritarian political or professional societies dominated design decision making without making reference to the intended users (Milgrom, 2003). By the late 1800s, rapid urban expansion in Britain, the United States and other industrializing countries led to poor housing and unsanitary living conditions, which often resulted in civic unrest and even rioting (Motloch, 2000; Donnachie, 2007). Planning movements such as “City Beautiful” and “Garden City” arose as a more aesthetically pleasing and healthy alternative, but decision making was still dominated by governments and authoritative bodies (Milgrom, 2003).

As society evolved through the 1950s, landscape architecture and planning adopted a “standards” based approach in an attempt to bring rationalization to the distribution of resources and land uses (Boland and Cranz, 2005). Though their efforts sought to address the needs of distinct communities and individuals, their solutions tended to be prescriptive generalizations, meant for society at large. In planning, the Rational Planning Model—which provided a systematic planning approach—relied on expertise rather than citizen input and tended

Citizens' Urban Renewal Action Committee meeting in Boston, 1962 (Schwachman, 1962).

to dominate the planning process. Similarly, in design, modernism emerged in the early 20th century and placed faith in technology, standardization, and specialized expertise (Stohr, 2006). In the design disciplines, rational, modernist values and techniques were widely used. These methods attempted—through top-down, functionalist approaches—to improve quality of life for the disadvantaged. This approach was also identified as flawed because of its focus on delivering the same physical result to everyone, rather than results that equitably served people's distinct needs. Alternatives demanded a more nuanced and complex approach to design and planning that included a detailed assessment of community and user needs and preferences.

As past approaches failed to accomplish their goal of improving the human condition, a growing mistrust in expertise and authority caused a major shift toward bottom-up interventions. This new approach utilized the applied knowledge of individuals and communities to design their own environments. With this shift came the widespread adoption of public participation and the emergence of participatory design. Initially, environmental design professionals were resistant to and doubtful of participatory design, which seemed to take design decisions out of the hands of trained professionals and give that power to an uneducated public (Hester, 2012).

Later, as the authority and standing of the traditional design expert waned (Meyer, 2011), the radical reformer/designer/community facilitator emerged to lead community oriented dialogues and empower local decision making through a more inclusive community driven approach (Crewe, 2001). Despite the success of this approach, most public participation efforts remained "paternalistic and confrontational" (Glicken, 2000, p. 307): superficial interactions involving preliminary programming separate from design, or the presentation of pre-determined solutions for "feedback" to a disengaged public. While the radical reformer/designers have never been in the majority in design, they present a successful approach to genuinely integrating public participation into design.

The approach to reform has continued to evolve; where the 1960s saw designers/planners working as activists in the street pushing ideals of more equitable and representative communities, more recent years have seen them employing a variety of methods and techniques to support communities through participatory design (Hester, 1989). Critics, though, have often highlighted the negatives they see in participatory design. Some have argued that participatory design can involve additional cost and/or additional time. They focus on the challenge of engaging multiple groups, using iterative processes, or losing efficiency through excessive design customization. There is concern that participatory design can also result in a diffusion of project goals, more pedestrian and less innovative design outcomes, a focus on superfluous characteristics or aesthetics, a lack of overall design legibility, integrity or consistency, modular or small scale thinking (Crewe, 2001), and "fuzzy and cluttered" designs (Melcher, 2013). Furthermore, it is said that the results can neglect non-tangible environmental factors or long-term complex issues (e.g, water or air quality) because of a public focus on tangible, short-term and personally relevant results. Sadly, poorly formed participatory design processes can at times neglect marginalized groups.

During the early days of public participation and participatory design, designers and

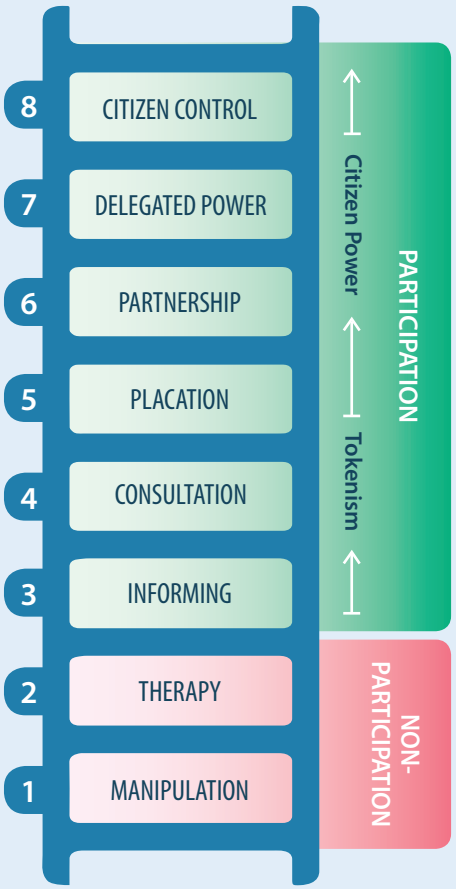
planners were highly idealistic in their goals and approaches (Comerio, 1984). However, much public participation failed to genuinely or thoroughly engage the public. Arnstein's ladder (1969), though very general, articulates many of the issues with superficial approaches to public participation. She separates the haves—the experts, the government, and other insiders with money and power—from the have-nots. Arnstein argues that there is always a power imbalance, and that those with the power can either choose to or choose not to share power with the public.

The ladder begins with (1) manipulation and (2) therapy, arguably forms of non-participation (see Figure 2.1). Manipulation and therapy do not seek public input or participation, but rather those in power seek to either claim to have consulted the oppressed public and garnered their support; or allow the public to air grievances while not truly listening to them. Climbing the ladder, the next levels of participation are considered "degrees of tokenism", which include: (3) informing, (4) consultation, and (5) placation. While the rungs within tokenism do provide the public with the opportunity to be heard, the structure of the processes do not provide the public with any true decision making power. Instead, the public is often only educated about issues, asked about their opinions or feelings, or given a semblance of power within a process structure that is weighted against them (Arnstein, 1969).

Reaching the top of the ladder, Arnstein defines the degrees of citizen power within which participatory design takes place. The (6) partnership rung describes projects in which the public and "powerholders" share responsibility and make decisions together. Next, (7) delegated power gives citizens true places of power within the design decision making process. Lastly, Arnstein sees the highest form of participatory design taking place within (8) citizen control where neighborhoods maintain control of the financial resources and have all formal decision making power.

Following Arnstein (1969), others developed frameworks to organize and differentiate between distinct approaches to the participatory process. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) supports practitioners across fields with public participation. IAP2 developed a spectrum that is based on an assumption of general adherence to core values which include: a basic right of the public to influence decisions

Figure 2.1 Arnstein's Ladder Adapted from Arnstein, 1969



that affect them; honest communication of the role that the public will play in the process; inclusion of all public perspectives and opinions; and, the opportunity for the public to influence how and when they participate in a process (IAP2, 2016).

With these core values guiding public participation processes, IAP2 considers any level of public participation as potentially beneficial and thus it is up to the designers and the public to determine when specific processes are employed.

IAP2 defines five levels of public participation as (1) inform, (2) consult, (3) involve, (4) collaborate, and (5) empower (Figure 2.2). The first two levels—(1) inform and (2) consult —are not considered participatory design. Instead they simply open a dialogue between the design professional and the public. These levels either provide information to the public about a project, or they request feedback about different components of a project. Subsequently, the levels (3) involve and (4) collaborate include the public in all steps of the process and provide

Figure 2.2 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation — Adapted from IAP2, 2016

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public on each aspect of the project including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques	• Fact sheets • Web sites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberative poling	• Citizen advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

Increasing Level of Public Impact ▶

them with varying degrees of decision making power. Ultimately the fullest form of participatory design described by IAP2—(5) empower—gives the public control over all design decisions. Though each of these levels of participation are distinct and vary in terms of the role of the public, all are intended to develop positive relationships between designers and the people they serve, with an overall goal of improving the quality of projects.

While some designers adopt a participatory process to empower a population, others might seek to promote equity. Still other designers might want to develop more site appropriate designs by learning about the needs, experiences, and ideas of a community. The following section will examine in detail a variety of approaches, their similarities and differences, and appropriate applications.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN METHODS

2.3

Since Arnstein (1969) articulated her "Ladder of Participation", many different participatory design methods and approaches have been developed, oftentimes by individual environmental design professionals who crafted a method for a specific project or community. Individual methods can be differentiated from one another by identifying the professional or organization that developed the method, what goals the method seeks to achieve, the role of the public at various stages, and the role and characteristics of both the designer and the participants in the process.

Participatory Design Defined by Stage of Participation

Participatory design exists on a series of continuum. It can be defined by the roles of the community versus other players in the project at each stage, such as the designer/facilitator, municipality, or volunteer organization.

For each stage, a particular participatory design approach can be more or less participatory—it can engage the community/neighborhood to a greater or lesser extent, and give the stakeholders greater or lesser decision making powers.

Participatory Design Defined by Choice and Implementation of Engagement Techniques

Participatory design can also be defined by the engagement techniques or tools that are adopted, and the venue for engagement, such as in-person or on-line, or the size of the group. Some venues are generally considered more participatory than others. In-person techniques are generally considered as achieving a higher level of engagement than techniques that are done at a distance, such as over the phone, by mail, or on-line. Work with individuals or groups can be equally engaging, though the size of group (one person or more) is best determined by the type of question being asked or the goal of the interaction.

Some participatory design approaches have a significant education component. Generally, this is the result of a desire to change the attitudes or behavior of individuals or groups within a community, but it may also be motivated by the need to increase awareness of a problem or issue. These processes can be elitist. Generally, education oriented participatory processes focus on informing the participant, rather than engaging them, or engagement is a delivery strategy used to maximize the impact of the message and its likelihood of changing the attitude or behavior in question (Cancian, 2016).

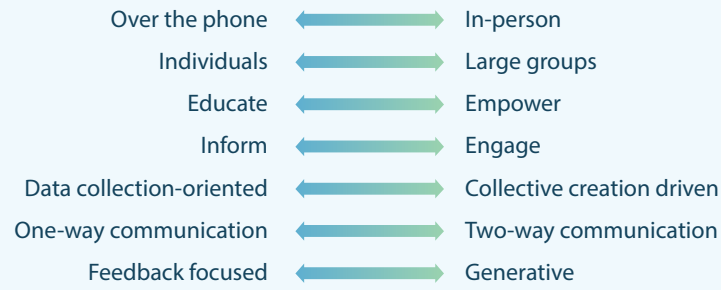
Some participatory design approaches adopt engagement tools and techniques that focus on the collection of data to guide or justify decision making by others. Other approaches are less about collecting information than they are about creating a dynamic process that leads to group decision making. Most projects exist somewhere

Residents of Cudahy develop the details for the design of their plaza.

Table 2.1 Participatory Design Defined by Stage of Participation

Stage	Questions?
Project Conceptualization	Who determined that the project was necessary? Who designed the project process? Who "started the ball rolling"?
Project Scope/Program	Who determined what should be done? What "things" should happen? What would be the end goal? What would be measures of success?
Site Assessment	Who assessed the area for its opportunities and limitations? Who evaluated different locations as potential sites for a design project(s)?
Site Selection	Who picked the site for the design project(s)?
Site Design	Who designed the alternatives for the site? Who determined the location of elements? Who determined the relationships between elements?
Design Evaluation	Who determined which aspects were priorities? Who determined which aspects were less important? Who evaluated the design for its ability to address the needs of the community? Who suggested modification to the design(s)?
Design Modification	Who modified the design based on the evaluation? Who decided what to prioritize when there was conflicting feedback?
Design Selection	Who selected and approved the final design?
Funding/Project Finances	Who acquired the resources for the project? Who paid for/provided resources for the project to be built?
Construction	Who built the project?
Maintenance	Who will maintain the project? Who will provide resources for repairs?

Figure 2.3 Level of Engagement for Techniques and Tools



on the continuum between data collection and full delegation of power to the community. Generally, a higher level of engagement is achieved when that is prioritized over data collection.

Finally, some participatory design tools are oriented to one-way communication, such as newsletters, blogs, or other information delivery mechanisms. These tools tend to result from a goal of informing the community, and may or may not be aimed at education. Two-way communication tools require some type of interaction between community members and those outside the community involved in the project (designers, facilitators, experts, government groups, non-profit organizations, etc.). Approaches can also be either feedback focused or generative in nature: tools and techniques can be adopted because they provide a forum for feedback, or, at the far extreme, for their ability to help engage the

community in generating designs, solutions, and decisions. Generally, a higher level of engagement is achieved with a two-way communication process that is generative in nature.

Residents of Bell participate in a design workshop.

PARTICIPATORY TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

2.4

Blogs
On-line journal or notice board where practitioners can update, share ideas, communicate with participants, dialogue and debate.

Canvassing
Involves systematically going door-to-door in a neighborhood or district, engaging the residents of each house or building in discussion using strategically designed questions, sharing information and closing with a request for involvement, donation, or action.

Community Educational Forum
The public is invited to listen to and view information on a project as group and then given an opportunity to ask questions. As compared to a community meeting (see below), an educational forum is not intended as a venue for collecting comments or seeking input.

Community Education Symposia
An extension of the educational forum, a community education symposium can involve a half-day or longer series of educational forums and discussions about a project.

Community Meetings (Workshops)
Participants engage in activities and breakout groups with the goal of making decisions and accomplishing previously identified goals (Buckley, 2006). Though these meetings aim to produce decisions and content similar to a workshop, they are often titled meetings to create less formality, so as to draw more members of the community.

Crowdsourcing
Uses the wisdom and knowledge of a large population to take advantage of their collective intelligence towards some goal, generally undertaken on the internet (Brabham, 2009). Questions or tasks are posed to the population, and their responses are posted on-line for review and comment by the group.

Design Charrettes
A carefully structured process facilitated by practitioners during which a diverse group of participants work to solve design problems.

Design Workshops
These are used to develop and refine designs, supported by materials and activities that allow participants to conceptualize the implications of designs and to ultimately make decisions regarding design selection (Buckley, 2006).

Diagramming Exercises
These exercises engage participants in taking note of observations and ideas using diagrams. Diagrams may include calendars, pie charts, and time lines, and act as organizational tools (Hamdi, 1997).

Focus Groups
A gathering of a small group of people intended to represent a broader community. It can include a range of other methods and activities to extract information from participants.

Games and Role Playing
Participants are exposed to simulations or are asked to play roles in scenarios and circumstances. These games and exercises can be useful to introduce new perspectives and are often used to introduce new vocabulary, processes, and knowledge related to design or planning (Hamdi, 1997).

Interviews
A type of survey, generally conducted verbally in-person or over the phone. They involve a series of questions and answers, and can be structured (with a pre-defined list of questions in a specific order), semi-structured (with a series of questions to encourage a dialogue), or unstructured (no pre-determined questions). Usually, one party asks the questions and the other party provides the answers. Interviews can involve individuals or groups.

Kitchen Table Meetings
Small informal meetings usually at the home of a community member, involving open discussion and the sharing of food (IAP2, 2006).

Mapping Exercises
Generally used to visually document locationally-specific information and to allow participants to express opinions, experiences, and other perspectives related to a location or many locations (Hamdi, 1997).

Measuring Exercises

Involve participants using measuring tools, equipment, and base maps to measure aspects of a site. They are used to make participants aware of scale and the size of spaces before engaging in programming or design.

Newsletters

Traditional communication device similar to blog (see above). Sent using email or traditional mail, this one-way communication tool is commonly used to inform an audience about upcoming events, projects, and other updates.

One-on-One Meetings

In-person meetings between an organizer and a community member during which the organizer seeks to: 1) establish a personal relationship; 2) learn what motivates that person; 3) establish their credibility and trustworthiness; 4) introduce the project; and 5) seek a commitment from them to participate in the project.

Open Houses

A public display of information regarding a project. Members of the public are invited to review the material and ask questions of project staff individually. In some cases, an open house begins with a presentation; most often members of the public arrive and depart between prescribed hours to review and comment on materials individually.

Photo Journals

Involves asking participants to take photographs of a place or activity over time and then either use them to create a personal visual story or to create a collective story.

Public Meetings

Advertised, open access events at which a project is presented and input is sought from all those in attendance. Unlike community meetings (see above), public meetings do not typically include breakout groups, deliberation, or decision making. Public meetings are generally fairly formal events with the audience sitting in rows facing a speaker or panel of speakers with a chairperson who controls the proceedings.

Questionnaires

Used to gather a variety of information from communities, either performed in-person, by mail, on-line, or over the phone, allowing the practitioner to select a specific population and obtain individual opinions or perspectives (Hester, 1984).

Round Table Forums

A group discussion format that involves several participants who are given a topic to discuss and debate. Round table forums can include an audience.

Simulations

Often used during games (as discussed above) in which participants act out real events or activities to give them a view into what it might be like to experience that event, and to test responses and plans in response to events.

Site Selection Walks

While walking through a neighborhood, community members engage in mapping exercises to observe conditions, document findings, and identify issues and concerns related to the experience of exploring and choosing potential project sites (Hamdi, 1997).

Staffed Street Displays

A display regarding a project that is placed in an area of high pedestrian traffic and staffed by project team members who seek to engage the public in discussion about the project. Staffed street displays often include a table with handouts and questionnaires, boards, maps, videos, and interactive activities.

Steering Committee Meetings

A gathering of community participants who have chosen or been selected to be part of a leadership committee to guide a project. Conducted similarly to community meetings (see above), but with select community members and used to prepare for other meetings, workshops, work days, etc.

Transect Development

Transect development involves the creation of a section through the project area and surroundings to illustrate and understand how elements of the project and surroundings relate to each other. It can be communicated using photo collages made by participants.

Work Days

These events often consist of community maintenance or build days (river clean up, community construction, mural painting, etc.), involving physical engagement by participants with a resource.

Table 2.2 Tools, Techniques, and Methods

Tool/Technique	Group or Individual Activity	Forum (in-person or other)	Primary Activity (discussion or other)	Focus (education, data collection, idea generation)	Communication Format (one-way or two-way)	Venue (public or private)
Blogs	Individual	On-line	Written ideas	Education; idea generation	One-way	Public
Canvassing	Individual	In-person or via flyer	Receiving information; providing feedback	Education; engagement; feedback	Primarily one-way	Public or private
Community Educational Forums	Group	In-person	Presentation	Education	One-way	Public
Community Education Symposia	Group	In-person	Presentation	Education	One-way	Public
Community Meetings	Group	In-person	Creative activity	Education; engagement; data collection; idea generation	Two-way	Public
Crowdsourcing	Individual contributions to a group effort	On-line	Written ideas	Data collection; idea generation	One-way	Public
Design Charrettes or Workshops	Group	In-person	Creative activity	Engagement; idea generation	Two-way	Public
Diagramming Exercises	Group	In-person	Creative activity	Idea generation	Two-way	Public
Focus Groups	Group	In-person	Discussion	Data collection; engagement; idea generation	Two-way	Public
Games & Role Playing	Group	In-person	Physical interaction	Engagement	Two-way	Public
Interviews	Individual; group	In-Person; on-line; phone	Receiving information; discussion	Data collection	Primarily one-way	Private
Kitchen Table Meetings	Group	In-person	Discussion	Data collection; engagement; idea generation	Two-way	Public
Mapping Exercises	Individual; group	In-person	Creative activity	Data collection	One-way	Public or private
Measuring Exercises	Group	In-person	Physical interaction	Data collection; engagement	Two-way	Public

Table 2.2 Tools, Techniques and Methods (cont.)

Tool/Technique	Group or Individual Activity	Forum (in-person or other)	Primary Activity (discussion or other)	Focus (education, data collection, idea generation)	Communication Format (one-way or two-way	Venue (public or private)
Newsletters	Individual	On-line or mail	Information communication	Education	One-way	Public
One-on-One Meetings	Individual	In-Person	Discussion	Data collection	Primarily one-way	Private
Open Houses	Group	In-Person	Receiving information; providing feedback	Education; feedback	Primarily one-way	Public
Photo Journals	Individual; group	In-person	Physical interaction	Data collection	One-way	Private
Public Meetings	Group	In-Person	Receiving information; providing feedback	Education; feedback	Two-way	Public
Questionnaires	Individual	In-Person; on-line; phone	Receiving information	Data collection	Primarily one-way	Private
Round Table Forums	Group	In-person	Discussion	Data collection; engagement; idea generation	Two-way	Public
Simulations	Individual; group	In-person or on-line	Creative activity	Engagement	One-way	Private
Site Selection Walks	Group	In-person	Physical interaction	Data collection	Two-way	Public
Staffed Street Displays	Group	In-person	Information communication	Education	One-way	Public
Steering Committee Meetings	Group	In-person	Creative activity	Education; engagement; data collection; idea generation	Two-way	Public
Transect Development	Group	In-person	Physical interaction	Data collection	Two-way	Public
Work Days	Group	In-person	Physical interaction	Engagement	Two-way	Public

One-way communication can be community to designer/ expert/facilitator or designer/expert/facilitator to community

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN APPROACHES

2.5

Most planners and designers develop a customized participatory process based on the goals of the project, the character of the community, and the physical, political, and economic context. However, there are several "signature" approaches that reflect the range of tools and techniques that characterize participatory design.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)

Participatory Learning and Action was collectively developed as a means to enable local people to make their own appraisals, analysis, and plans and can be considered a 'rebranding' of earlier, similar approaches known as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Pretty et al., 1995). RRA and PRA are a set of informal methods used by development professionals in rural areas to collect and analyze data (Thomas, 2012). These methods evolved in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the perceived problems of outsiders missing or miscommunicating with local people in the context of development work (Chambers, 1994). PLA is intended to allow local people to participate in the data collection and analysis of local conditions, with outsiders facilitating rather than controlling the process (Pretty et al., 1994). PLA is considered a long-term commitment to the ongoing development of a community's capacity to not only identify its own needs, but also to implement action plans to improve its own conditions (Appel et al., 2012).

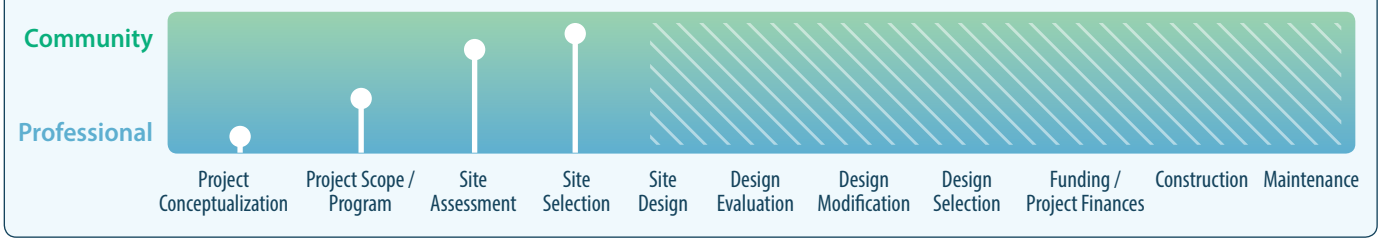
Design professionals facilitate learning and expression among communities about the local environment, potentially fostering stewardship values. The designers work with the community by asking questions about the landscape and social and cultural context. Through this questioning process, the community recognizes its assets and opportunities, and an increased sense of responsibility for, or connection to, the landscape can result. The designer is typically an outsider interested in working within the community. Through this collaborative relationship, community members can be made aware of the landscape and discover additional environmental concerns and resources. The designer's main role is as a facilitator and technical consultant (Pretty et al., 1995).

Participants share their knowledge of local conditions and, through the use of PLA tools, provide data about community wants, needs, and desires. Throughout this process, participants combine the sharing of insights with analysis and, in so doing, provide a catalyst for the communities themselves to act on what is uncovered. The end goal is successful community development by building local capacity for economic development through self-reliance (Appel et al., 2012).

PLA by Stage of Participation

Project conceptualization:
Ideally, community members determine when projects are necessary, with assistance from professionals. Generally, however, the location of many projects in developing countries and/or rural areas means that often people have neither the resources nor the education to initiate a project. Often non-governmental organizations (NGO) or public sector groups identify an area in need, and hire a professional to reach out to the community and begin a needs assessment process. Over time, the PLA process is designed to move responsibility for the project from the professional to the community (Pretty et al., 1995).

Figure 2.4 Role of Participants in Participatory Learning and Action



Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

Project scope/program:
Often, the NGO or public sector group has identified an issue or opportunity that it have prioritized. Through the PLA process, the professional works with the community to explore that issue or opportunity in light of local priorities and resources. Over time, the locals determine a plan of action.

Site assessment:
Locals assess opportunities and limitations, as well as evaluate locations for a project, with assistance from professionals.

Site selection:
Locals pick sites for development, if required.

Site design, design evaluation, design modification, design selection, funding/ project finances, construction, and maintenance:
PLA is a planning tool. There is no site design.

Funding/project finances:
Funding is generally provided by the group that initiated the project and/or local government or non-profit organizations. Locals often provide in-kind resources when possible.

PLA Engagement Techniques

PLA commonly uses the following techniques to encourage community participation:

- *Focus groups or group meetings* are used to encourage discussion about local conditions, issues and opportunities. There are a wide range of tools used to elicit information and encourage interaction (CARE, 1999). These group interactions often include *mapping* and *ranking exercises* to aid in documentation and decision making.
- *Transect walks* are conducted with small groups of community members. They use them to map the neighborhood, its areas, and different land uses and natural resources. They often involve the creation or annotation of maps to locate and characterize different areas.
- *Participatory mapping* happens as part of a *focus group*, *transect walk*, or other interaction. Cognitive maps, wealth maps, and creative mapping tools can be used to document existing conditions or propose ideas.

Community Action Planning (CAP)

Community Action Planning (CAP) was developed by planners Nabeel Hamdi and Reinhard Goethert (Hamdi & Goethert, 1997). It aims to improve small-scale community development by empowering participants to design, implement, and manage their own neighborhood, as well as to develop an implementation plan by involving local citizens and stakeholders (Prashar, Sharma, and Shaw, 2011; Grawel, 1999; Prashar, Shaw, and Takeuchi, 2013; Sanoff, 2000).

Community Action Planning focuses on identifying the needs of the community and developing a viable action plan that can be implemented by the community in partnership with local government, non-profit groups, or others (Hamdi et al., 1997). It focuses on developing a priorities list that addresses opportunities, constraints, and obstacles. Participants include community leaders, representatives of various interest groups and stakeholders, project staff, and organization representatives. CAP generally includes a combination of large and small group discussion activities.

CAP identifies and prioritizes problems, explores solutions, identifies needed resources, and develops a plan of action (Wilcox, 1994). A key component is the exploration of "options and trade-offs": the expert helps the community identify the costs and benefits of each potential action (United Nations, 1993). The community selects the option to be implemented.

CAP by Stage of Participation

Project conceptualization:
Generally, an outside group (NGO, government, experts) identifies a need or problem in the community and brings in a professional to start the goal identification process.

Project scope/program:
Through the CAP process, the community identifies its goals based on its needs and resources. CAP aims to build an action plan based on the identified problems and issues in the project neighborhood.

Site assessment:
The community assesses the opportunities and limitations, and evaluates the local environmental context.

Figure 2.5 Role of Participants in Community Action Planning

Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

Site selection, site design, design evaluation, design modification, design selection, construction, maintenance:
CAP is a planning tool. There is no site design.

Funding/project finances:
The community assesses the existing resources in their neighborhood and conducts a trade-off assessment to identify the costs and benefits of a given plan.

CAP Engagement Techniques

The key component of CAP is an intense *community workshop* that continues over several days (Goethert and Hamdi, 1988). The workshop uses *large and small group discussions* and *brainstorming* to explore the issues, priorities, and solutions of the community. *Trade-off assessments* are central to the technique, and involve the expert identifying the costs of various community proposals and encouraging discussion of the relative benefits of the proposed actions (United Nations, 1993).

Advocacy Planning and Design (APD)

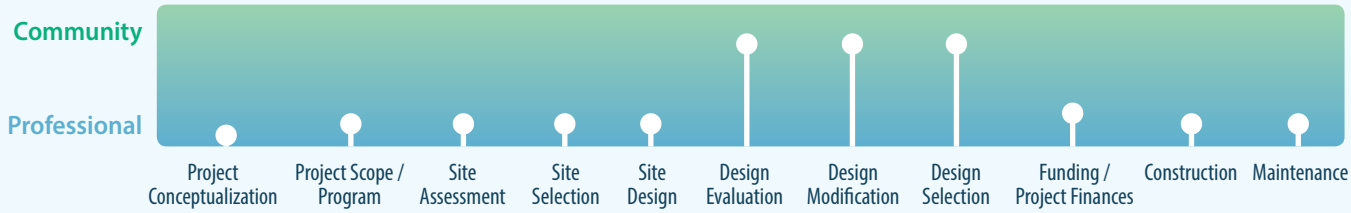
Advocacy Planning and Design (APD) is the product of grassroots efforts resulting from dissatisfaction with traditional planning approaches (Arnstein, 1969; Hester, 2005; Hester, 2012). Urban historian Jane Jacobs and planner Dolores Hayden were two of the earliest and most active promoters of Advocacy Planning and Design. Jane Jacobs advocated for those in underserved and underprivileged communities in New York City as aggressive urban renewal began shaping neighborhoods based on the Rational Planning Model (Heskin, 1980). The top-down approach of rational planning and modern design disregarded minority cohorts of the population (Clavel, 1994; Bullard, 2005). At the time, planning and design were assessed using rigid economic indicators, which neglected the cultural fabric and micro-economies in neighborhoods. The goal of APD was to incorporate the needs, cultures, and ideas of local people and increase funding in areas typically neglected by government programs (Hysing, 2013).

Advocacy Planning and Design attempts to address cultural, environmental, and social discrimination and inequities within the urban context (Clavel, 1994; Bullard, 2005). While APD always addresses discriminated and marginalized populations, it can include different approaches for involving citizens in design (Hysing, 2013). Generally, APD allows citizens and the public to work directly with professionals such as planners and landscape architects through public meetings, focus groups, and design charrettes. APD uses a range of tools and is defined more by the role of the professional as an advocate for the minority or disadvantaged group they represent, than by the process itself.

"Advocacy planners tried to empower the community by providing technical support and political advice, without imposing their own values, decisions or strategies on their client groups. They worked to overcome cultural, class and language barriers to assist under-represented and under-resourced community groups in communicating with technocrats and negotiating with administrators" (Birkeland, 1999, p. 114).

Historically, Advocacy Planning and Design responded retroactively to a lack of attention to cultural, environmental, and social characteristics disproportionately affecting minority populations (Hayden,1995). The planners advocated to prioritize certain elements of community and regional plans, policies, and site design to address inequities. The projects were often predetermined by an external group, and the APD process was directed at modifying, relocating, or prioritizing proposals made by others (Hayden,1995).

Figure 2.6 Role of Participants in Advocacy Planning & Design



Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

Projects using this approach range from small to large or even regional scale. Smaller scale projects can be constructed by citizens or contractors where larger projects are often built by local governments. Planners and designers define their role based on the needs of the community. This means that a cause is identified either through initial site reconnaissance or through meetings with the community. Advocacy Planning and Design projects identify a specific inequity that impacts minority populations.

Participants act as local experts providing information that cannot always be discovered through professional research. Information may be gathered through various methods such as community meetings, interviews, and design charrettes.

APD by Stage of Participation

Project conceptualization, project scope/ program, site assessment, site selection, site design:
Generally, the project is conceptualized, programmed, and designed by a group external to the community.

Design evaluation, design modification, design selection:
In APD, the community is encouraged to comment on or demand revisions to a proposed project or design. This feedback is provided through a range of tools, including letter writing, meetings, and group discussions. The design may be revised based on the participation of the community, or features which make it more reflective of the social and cultural context may be added to the design.

Funding/project finances, construction, maintenance:
Projects are generally paid for, built, and maintained by local organizations or governments.

APD Engagement Techniques

APD commonly uses the following techniques to encourage community participation:

- Local community members or external groups may begin a *canvassing* campaign to encourage awareness of an issue of relevance to a particular community.
- *Focus groups* and *group meetings* are conducted to educate community members about the proposal, to discuss its impact, and to develop plans of action.
- *Design workshops* can occur as a result of advocacy, with the designer or planner involving representatives of the community in discussions of meaning, history, cultural stories, and the integration of amenities that reflect these characteristics in the design.

Community Design Method (CDM)

The Community Design Method (CDM) was designed by landscape architect and sociologist Randolph Hester and economist Marcia McNally to empower communities to take part in the design of their local environment (Hester, 1984). According to Hester (1984), it involves the following 12 steps:

Step 1: Listening
Meeting with local opinion leaders to gain an understanding of the community.

Step 2: Setting Neighborhood Goals
Utilizing a goals survey to better understand the desires of the community.

Step 3: Mapping and Inventory
Collecting information about the neighborhood and creating maps, both through cognitive mapping exercises with the community and technical maps created by experts.

Step 4: Introducing the Neighborhood to Itself
Sharing the results of the inventory and

mapping stages with the public with the aim of allowing residents to correct map errors.

Step 5: Getting a Gestalt
Identifying a single phrase that defines the community's identity, goals, and situation.

Step 6: Drawing Anticipated Activity Settings
Listing anticipated activities (both proposed and current), their likely users, and mapping them in their proposed settings.

Step 7: Letting Archetypes and Idiosyncrasies Inspire Form
Examining the activity settings results and designing a set of performance standards for each based on its spatial requirements.

Step 8: Making a Conceptual Yardstick
Comparing performance standards for each activity setting to determine compatibility and fit in the landscape.

Step 9: Developing a Spectrum of Design Plans
Developing several alternative designs to address community goals.

Step 10: Evaluating Costs and Benefits Before Construction
Evaluating the various costs and benefits of each design alternative utilizing a list of performance standards created by the designer.

Step 11: Transferring Responsibility
Transitioning responsibility from designers to the community.

Step 12: Evaluating After Construction
Evaluating the project to determine whether the performance standards have been met (Hester, 1984).

Designers are experts who analyze the community's inputs and design the solutions. Participants need only be experts in their community and equipped with local knowledge. They are responsible for providing inventory information, setting program goals, and ultimately critiquing the expert's analysis and design (Hester, 1984).

While several stages of the process occur with minimal public input, they have the opportunity to give feedback on almost every phase, and many phases, such as inventory, occur as joint efforts between experts and citizens. The stages of design that are led by the designer are those that require some degree of design acumen. Each party performs the tasks for which they are most qualified. The designer designs, and the community members give feedback based on their knowledge of the community and their desires. By avoiding community involvement in the most technical and specialized stages, the process leverages the strengths of each group and minimizes time and financial costs.

CDM by Stage of Participation

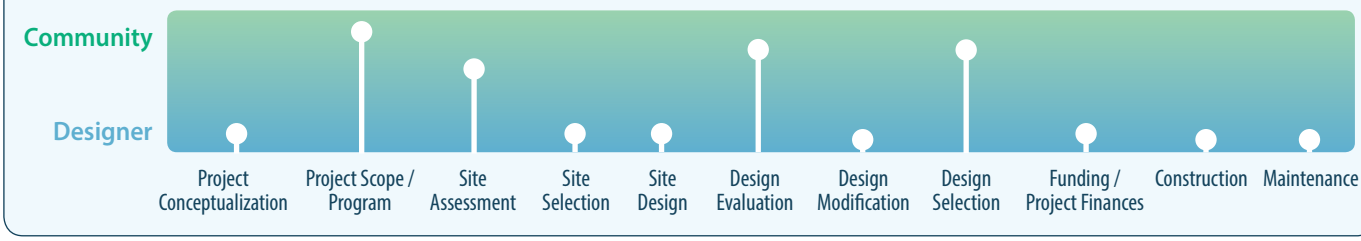
Project conceptualization:
Generally, an issue or problem is identified in a community by an external group such as local government or a non-profit, and they hire the expert/designer/facilitator to create a process to work with members of the community.

Project scope/program:
CDM often involves a questionnaire distributed to a stratified random sample of community members. The results are combined with interviews with key community leaders, focus groups, and public meetings. Mapping exercises determine the community's current and future needs (Hester, 1984).

Site assessment:
A mapping and inventory phase combines community-based social/cultural cognitive mapping exercises with expert-created maps of zoning, land use, hydrology, and other biophysical characteristics. The designer uses both qualitative social-cultural and quantitative biophysical data to evaluate the compatibility of various program elements with different physical locations (Hester, 1984).

Site selection:
The designer takes the community-determined

Figure 2.7 Role of Participants in Hester's Community Design Method



Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

program list and evaluates available sites for their ability to accommodate the program. The result is a conceptual plan with the program associated with different sites (Hester, 1984).

Site design:
The designers prepare three designs to present to the public and present each of them at a public meeting, where the public provides feedback and/or ranks the designs. Updates on the project are provided through articles in the media to ensure that all members of the community are informed of any new progress relating to the project (Hester, 1984).

Design evaluation:
The designer develops evaluation criteria based on the community survey and interviews, and works with the community to evaluate the design alternatives and select a preferred plan (Hester, 1984).

Design modification, design selection:
Once the community has voted on the presented plan(s), the designer is responsible for working with the client (local government or other) on revising the design as necessary and developing the necessary policies, guidelines, design and construction drawings to implement the plan (Hester, 1984).

Funding/project finances, construction, maintenance:
Project funding, implementation and maintenance resources are provided by the client, local government or other group external to the community (Hester, 1984).

CDM Engagement Techniques

According to Hester (1984), CDM commonly uses the following techniques to encourage community participation:

- In-person *Interviews* are conducted with local "thought leaders" (politicians, key community members, stakeholder group representatives, etc.).
- A *questionnaire* is administered to a stratified random sample of community members to set community goals, preferences, and priorities.
- *Focus groups* and *public meetings* include mapping exercises where community members work together in small groups to map the physical and unique cultural characteristics of their community.

Community Building (CB)

Community Building (CB) was developed in the 1960s by Karl Linn as an alternative design approach that grew out of social activism (Melcher, 2013). It attempted to promote equity, empowerment, and participation in underserved and disadvantaged communities, with a focus on design, social work, and environmental psychology (Melcher, 2013). Community Building follows a standard design process but includes community participants in brainstorming ideas, design selection, and construction (Melcher, 2013).

The designer is the facilitator, helping the community members define their problem and generate a solution by providing design team expertise, running design workshops, writing grant proposals, organizing volunteer workdays, obtaining materials, and coordinating implementation. Ideally, participants are stakeholders and community members who take on internal and external leadership roles, working with the designers to develop skills for future projects in which they can be leaders and facilitators (Melcher, 2013). Designers use capacity-building exercises to assist community members in controlling the design and planning process (Sanoff, 2000). They create multiple partnerships and teach community groups and individuals how to manage projects on their own, so that communities can plan, implement, and maintain the project after the initial phase ends (Sanoff, 2000).

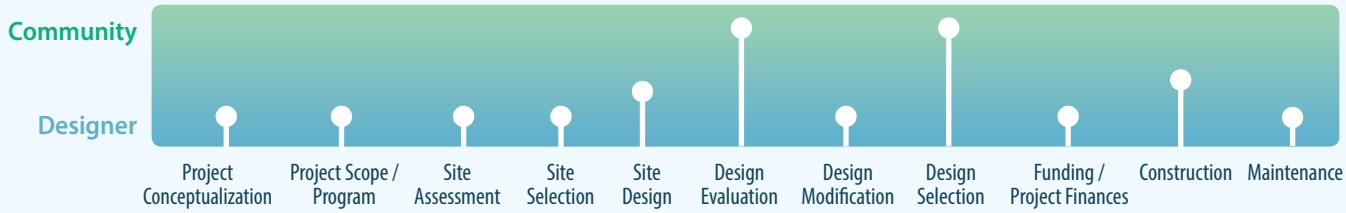
CB by Stage of Participation

Project conceptualization:
Experts identify an underserved community and select underused or unused properties for redevelopment into public spaces (Linn, 2007).

Project scope/program:
Sites are selected according to the needs of the community and land availability. Generally, the program for each site is determined by the expert team based on an assessment of the local community and its anticipated needs, and often in response to a predetermined provision standard to improve equality of access (Linn, 2007).

Site assessment:
The experts assess opportunities and limitations of potential sites for a design project.

Figure 2.8 Role of Participants in Community Building



Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

Site selection:
Project sites are identified and selected by the expert.

Site design:
Community members work with the expert in a focus group setting to generate information. Community Building focuses on "environmental management"—creating a beautiful and evocative space for community meetings using lighting, flowers, and other amenities to stimulate creativity in participants (Linn, 2007). The community members work in small groups to express their ideas and insights. The expert develops the final site design by integrating these insights with the program and site characteristics (Linn, 2007).

Design evaluation, design modification, selection:
The expert presents the design(s) to community members for feedback and evaluation. The community members select the preferred design for implementation.

Funding/project finances:
Projects are funded by local government or other non-profit groups.

Construction:
Community members participate in the construction process with contractors, building one or more components of the project.

Maintenance:
Maintenance can be an issue with Community Building projects. Local governments may refuse to maintain projects they were not responsible for building. Community members cannot be responsible for regular maintenance because of the resources and expertise required (Linn, 2007).

CB Engagement Techniques

Community Building commonly uses the following techniques to encourage community participation:

- *Canvassing* involves passing out fliers and promoting involvement in the project.
- *Focus groups* are primarily done in-person using a discussion format. They are designed to gather information and reflect on unique community characteristics.
- Volunteer *work days* include community involvement in collaborative building and use of donated resources.
- *Design workshops/charrettes* are in-person group efforts that provide design inspiration.

RSVP Cycles

The RSVP method was developed in the 1960s as a creative public participation tool (Halprin, 1969). It was created by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and his wife Anna Halprin, a pioneer in modern dance (Halprin, 1969). RSVP breaks down the traditional paradigm of rigid, goal-oriented projects in the design professions (Halprin, 1969). Instead, RSVP focuses on developing project goals and programming through a more free-form creative process (Halprin, 1969).

RSVP engages participants in four stages:

Resources (R) The interests, ideals, personal objectives, and motivations of the different members of the community are identified and recorded during individual interviews.

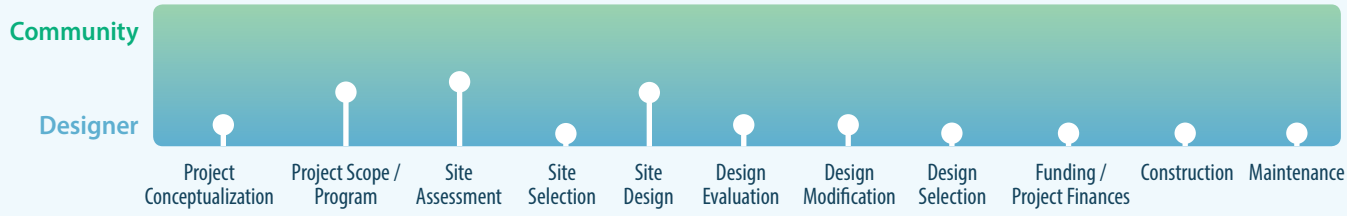
Scores (S) The representation of realities through graphics by individuals in the community.

Valuaction (V) The decision making and feedback process determines what should be prioritized through discussion in group meetings.

Performance (P) The community creates a collaborative "master score", which is then used by the expert to develop a final "score" or design (Halprin, 1969).

The designer in RSVP is a community outsider and expert who facilitates the first three stages

Figure 2.9 Role of Participants in Halprin's RSVP



Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

(resources, scores, and valuaction) of the community project. Then, once the "early scores" (early sketches by the community) and the "master scores" (well defined plans by the community members) are completed, they take the role of designer, interpreting these master scores and turning them into a professional "final score".

Participants in the RSVP cycles can be any member of the public, including stakeholders of various interest groups. Community members are solicited for involvement through written communication. Their role varies throughout the process: at first they are the designers, but once the "master scores" are completed, the public becomes the client.

RSVP by Stage of Participation

Project conceptualization:
Projects are initiated by a government or non-profit group.

Project scope/program:
The general program is established by the client and the expert. Community members and stakeholders provide ideas and insights via interviews.

Site assessment:
The community is involved in experientially assessing the site(s) through interviews and "scores" that explore the site's characteristics using a range of community tools in a focus group setting. The expert performs a more traditional biophysical site assessment to establish limitations and opportunities that are communicated to project participants.

Site selection:
The expert/client selects the site.

Site design:
Community members are only involved during the inventory and design process. Public input is limited to brainstorming exercises, design elements, and layout. The key stage of participation is the creation of the "individual scores" and the group "master score" which are used to inspire the expert design.

Design evaluation, design modification, design selection, construction:
The expert, major stakeholders (government agencies or external groups) and client evaluate the design alternatives, select the final design, and implement the project.

Funding/project finances, construction, maintenance:
Funding and other resources for project construction and maintenance are provided by the client or local government group.

RSVP Engagement Techniques

RSVP commonly uses the following techniques to encourage community participation:

- Individual *interviews* are conducted to explore the priorities and interests of local residents and stakeholders.
- *Design workshops/charrettes* are conducted in-person with community members to collect design ideas, program ideas, and construction details. Tools used include *brainstorming*, *mapping exercises*, and *design ideation* using a series of prompts or questions.

Co-Design

In Co-Design, the professional suggests a range of optional processes or strategies for addressing a community need. Community members evaluate the options and choose their course of action. When projects are initiated by an external group, the community takes on the leadership role starting with the program and scope. Structured community leadership is

a key element of Co-Design. A representative steering committee serves as the leadership of the project, planning and preparing for workshops, and collaborating with and directing the expert/designer/facilitator (EDF) between workshops. This structured leadership enables community members to direct the process and keep EDFs accountable to the community. The division of labor and decision making between workshops and steering committee meetings varies by project and phase of project.

Co-Design by Stage of Participation

Project conceptualization:
Ideally, from the point Co-Design begins, community members lead. A Co-Design project is initiated because community members express a need for "X." Often an organization from outside the community recognizes a need for resident-serving improvements. This recognition may be a response to community members speaking out or the result of a person or agency's observation and analysis. The organization or government agency asks Co-Designers to facilitate a community design process after the project has been determined necessary and a site is selected.

Project scope/program:
In Co-Design, the project scope and program is collectively determined by community members. When organizations and government agencies fully embrace Co-Design for a project, they allow the community to make decisions on program without limits or influence. Often, however, organizations and agencies require involvement, and will provide initial answers to these questions as starting points for discussions with the community, or limit the range of possible solutions.

Site assessment:
Once Co-Designing begins, community members collectively assess the site(s) with EDF support. Community members evaluate the site independently rather than respond to information provided by the expert.

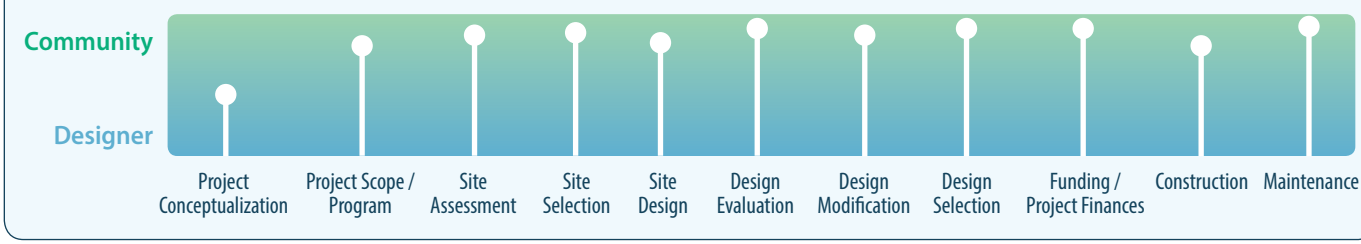
Site selection:
If Co-Designing begins before the site is selected, community members survey and evaluate all the site options and choose the site. If there is still flexibility on location, the Co-Designer will first organize the community members to compare the chosen site to other options and decide collectively what site is the best alternative.

Site design:
Community members in workshops start with blank base maps to begin the design process, rather than respond to designs provided by the expert. EDFs provide a range of tools and education on design principles. After the entire community articulates design alternatives and ranks them, the steering committee collaborates with EDFs to finalize alternatives and key questions to take back to the community. Depending on the complexity of the project, there will be from two to five cycles of workshops and steering committee meetings to create the final master plan or schematic design.

Design evaluation, design modification:
Community members in workshops determine priorities and what to include and exclude based on the limits of space and budget. Community members in workshops also evaluate the design and suggest modifications. Between the workshops, the steering committee collaborates with the EDF to integrate the community's ideas and identify key questions for the next workshop.

Design selection:
The final design is selected by the full community in a focus group or design workshop or by the steering committee during a group meeting.

Figure 2.10 Role of Participants in Co-Design



Role of participants based on most idealized participatory process, assuming that the designer is part of the process from the onset.

Funding/project finances:
In fully realized Co-Design/Build projects, labor is donated, and community members raise the funds for all materials. When Co-Design is applied to a non-profit or government-initiated project that does not yet have full funding, community members-particularly the steering committee-actively participate in making fundraising pitches, meeting with foundations etc. When Co-Design is applied to a fully funded non-profit or government project, community members do not participate in collecting funds, but participate in fund allocation decision making.

Construction:
In a fully realized Co-Design/Build project, community members participate in every stage of construction with the EDF serving as construction manager. In Co-Designed but contractor-built projects, community participation in construction is usually limited by liability and quality control concerns.

Maintenance:
The responsibility for day-to-day maintenance depends on the context and services available. Projects are most easily sustained by paid non-profit or government maintenance workers. If paid maintenance is not available, then the Co-Designing process naturally leads to organizing ongoing community maintenance. To sustain the intent of a Co-Designed project, community members should have a formal role in overseeing long term maintenance-such as painting, pruning, repairs, etc.

Co-Design Engagement Techniques

Co-Design commonly uses the following techniques to encourage community participation:

- *One-on-one meetings* with community members are conducted during *canvassing* processes. These meetings are discussion-based and are intended to build relationships, recruit project leaders and steering committee members, and gather information (Cancian, 2015).
- *Steering committee meetings* are conducted in-person and are discussion-based. These meetings establish the participatory design process and priorities, and provide decision making support between public forums (Cancian, 2015).
- *Focus groups/group meetings* are used to collect information about community needs and priorities, discuss issues, and brainstorm ideas (Cancian, 2015).
- *Design workshops/charrettes* are the venue for the physical design of the space using mapping tools and creative exercises (Cancian, 2015).

THE REGION

The Los Angeles River bends past the industrial City of Vernon and into the residential neighborhoods of the study region.
Photo credit: Doc Searls / Flickr

Downtown
Los Angeles
LA River
The
Region

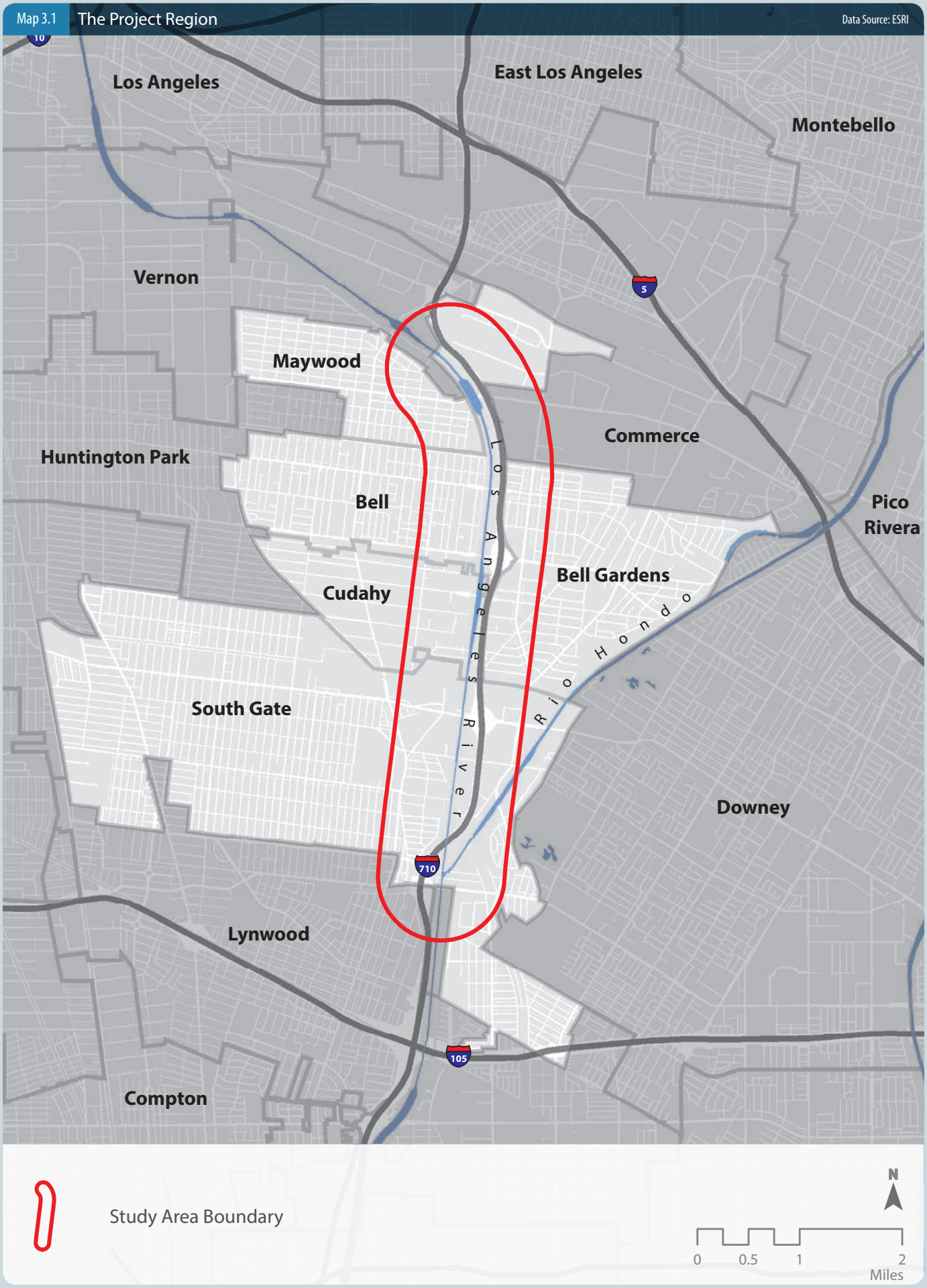
INTRODUCTION

3.1

Disadvantaged areas often struggle to inspire positive investments such as energy, time, and financial resources. The river-adjacent areas in Los Angeles County, extending from Maywood Riverfront Park in the north, to the confluence of the Los Angeles and Rio Hondo Rivers some four miles to the south, suffer from socioeconomic and environmental issues such as poverty, low levels of education, lack of outdoor recreational opportunities and so on. While these communities are adjacent to the Los Angeles River, they often lack a connection to it. While other parts of the Los Angeles River, primarily north of downtown and south towards Long Beach, have been the focus of many vision and planning projects, the study region, which is challenged by limited resources, failing political advocacy, and outdated historical development patterns, has often been neglected in these processes (Wolch, Wilson & Fehrenbach, 2002). As such, this area is an ideal location for community-based participatory design-build projects directed at building community capacity, improving local conditions, and generating positive political attention and energy.

This project focuses on river-adjacent communities within a half-mile of the Los Angeles River, and includes the communities of Maywood, Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, and South Gate (see Map 3.1). In this region the river is bordered by heavy industry, transportation corridors, and dense residential development. It is bisected by the 710 freeway which parallels the river, cutting many communities off from the river's potential amenities.

This section of the river channel in Cudahy exemplifies the typical 400 foot width and 20 foot depth common throughout the study area.


Map 3.1 The Project Region
Data Source: ESRI
Los Angeles
East Los Angeles
Montebello
Vernon
Maywood
Commerce
Huntington Park
Bell
Pico Rivera
Cudahy
Bell Gardens
South Gate
Los Angeles River
Rio Hondo
Downey
Lynwood
Compton
10
5
710
105
Study Area Boundary
N
0
0.5
1
2
Miles

LOS ANGELES RIVER PLANNING

3.2

Early master plans for the Los Angeles River, such as the county's *Los Angeles River Master Plan* (LACPDW, 1996), and the *Common Ground Plan* (SMMC & RMC, 2001), target broad strategies for greening the river corridor and transforming it into a community amenity instead of a single-purpose flood control channel (LACPDW, 1996; SMMC & RMC, 2001). Recent plans have focused on a more targeted revitalization vision, with specific strategies for incorporating multi-purpose green infrastructure across the river watershed (LADPW, 2007). These plans, however, are mainly focused on the northern and southern reaches of the river (see Figure 3.1). The City of Los Angeles' *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan* stops at the city's southern borders while Long Beach's *River Link Plan* focuses solely on the southernmost reach of the river (City of Long Beach, 2005). Moreover, all efforts to restore the ecosystem functions to the river channel are currently concentrated in an 11-mile stretch north of downtown Los Angeles. Thus, there is a gap in revitalization efforts in the middle section of the river, where this project's study area is located. Compared to other segments of the river, there has been little attention and fewer resources given to the study area by upper levels of government and other organizations.

There are plans to address this gap. The *LA River Integrated Design Plan,* being developed by the LA River Corp in collaboration with Gehry Partners, aims to develop new strategies for the entire 51 miles of the river. Additionally, recent legislation spearheaded by Assemblyman Anthony Rendon calls for an update to the county's master plan, with special focus on the lower LA River. Community involvement is a crucial component which is also neglected in these plans. The people who live in these communities must have a say in how river revitalization and open space planning ultimately shapes their neighborhoods.

Figure 3.1 Los Angeles River Master Plans

STUDY REGION CHARACTERISTICS

3.3

General Characteristics

Beginning in Canoga Park, the Los Angeles River forms from the confluence of Bell Creek and the Arroyo Calabasas. The river runs east and then turns south, traveling through the study region and terminating in Long Beach at the Port of Los Angeles. Within the study region, the Los Angeles River is completely channelized while in other areas the river has a soft-bottom allowing for natural vegetation. The channel width is significantly wider than in other river communities and development is behind a levee system which includes a regional bike path accessible at limited points.

River Characteristics

The river's physical form changes as land use and location changes. In communities such as Canoga Park, Sherman Oaks, and Glendale, for example, the channel width is almost half the size of it in the study region (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4). In other areas, the river has a soft bottom allowing vegetation to grow and water to infiltrate. This contrasts to the study region: the river is physically and visually isolated because of steep concrete walls and levees and an impervious concrete bottom. This is especially challenging for residents who feel discouraged to use bike paths and other river related facilities because of a lack of visual connection to their communities. In most of the study region, development has occurred below the level of the river embankment, proscribing a physical and visual connection to the channel.

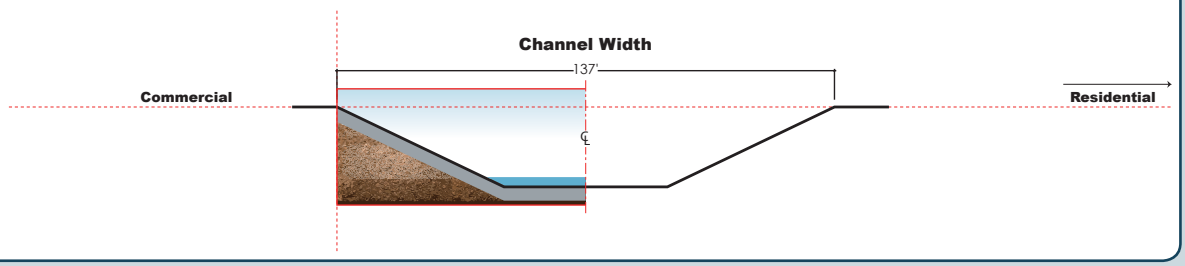
This bike path entrance in Winnetka, a neighborhood in Los Angeles, has an updated and well maintained hardscape surface.

This bike path entrance in the City of Cudahy is poorly maintained and suffers from vegetation overgrowth and graffiti.

Figure 3.2 Los Angeles River Sections by City

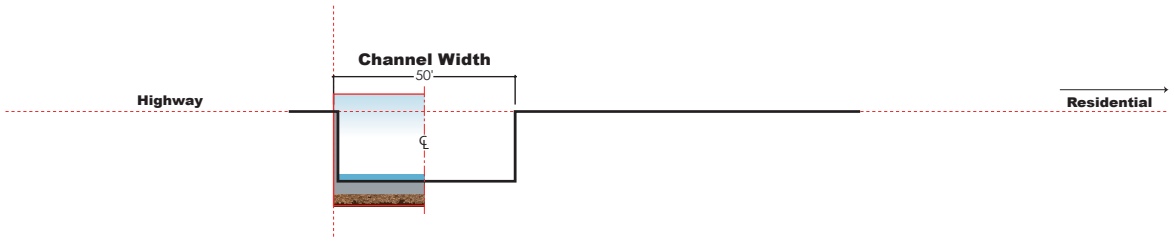
1 Canoga Park

Channel Width: 137′ River Bottom: 45′



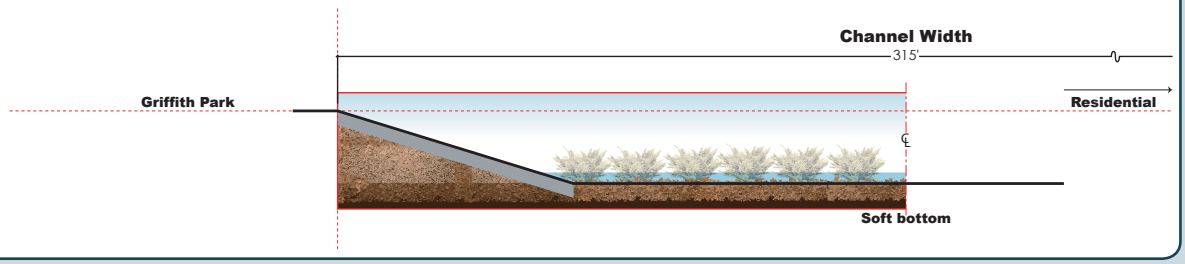
2 Sherman Oaks

Channel Width: 50′ River Bottom: 50′



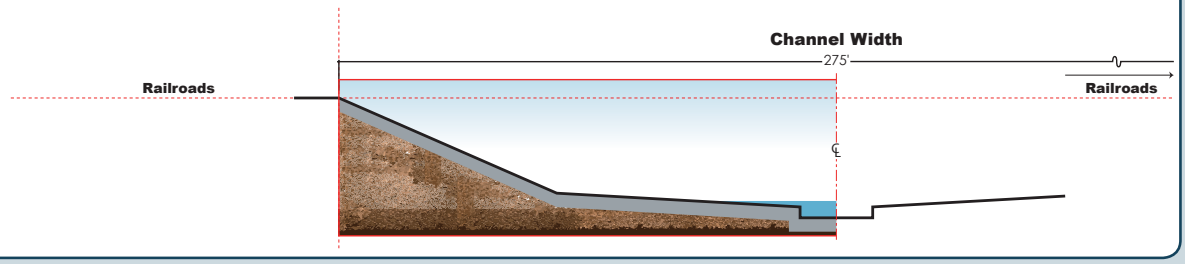
3 Glendale

Channel Width: 315′ River Bottom: 183′



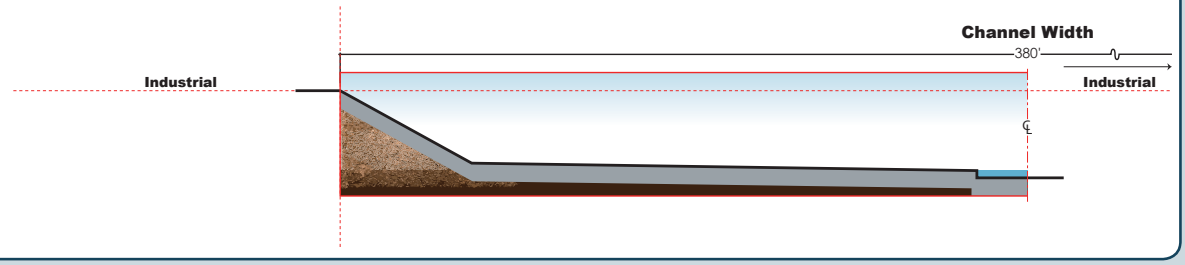
4 Los Angeles

Channel Width: 275′ River Bottom: 154′



5 Vernon

Channel Width: 380′ River Bottom: 308′



1 Canoga Park

2 Sherman Oaks

3 Glendale

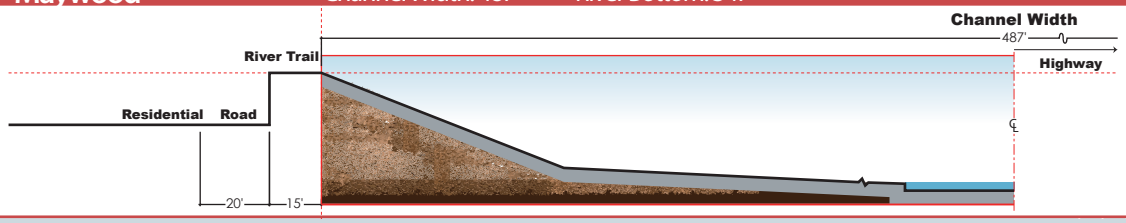
4 Los Angeles

5 Vernon

Figure 3.2 Los Angeles River Sections by City

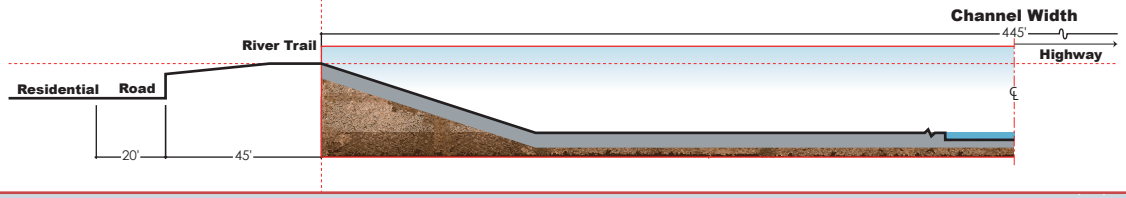
6 Maywood

Channel Width: 487′ River Bottom: 347′



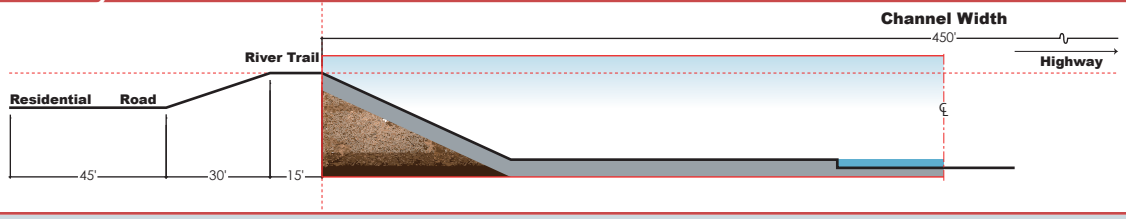
7/8 Bell / Bell Gardens

Channel Width: 445′ River Bottom: 325′



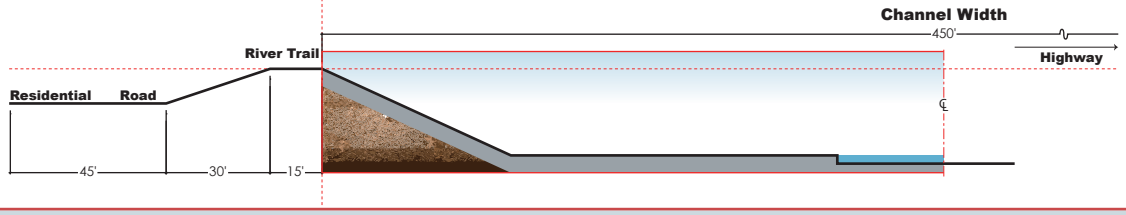
9 Cudahy

Channel Width: 450′ River Bottom: 340′



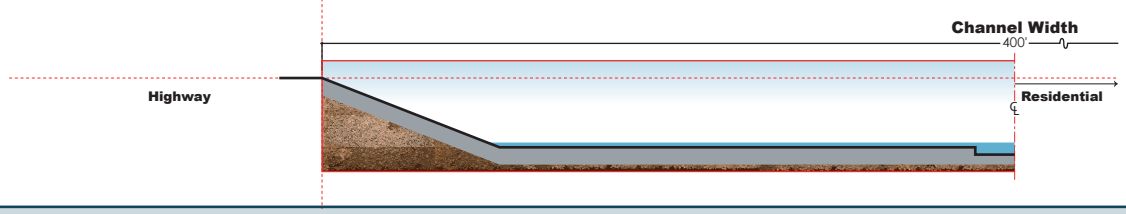
10 South Gate

Channel Width: 350′ River Bottom: 250′



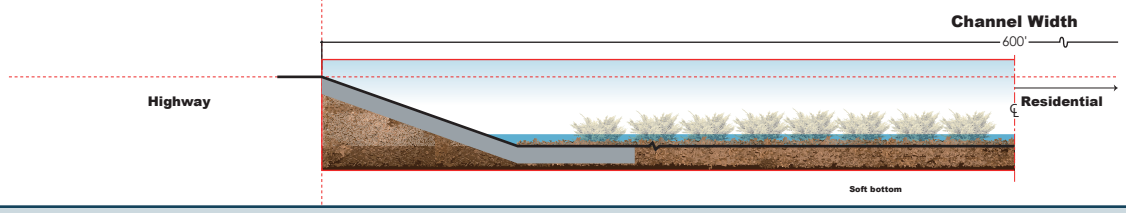
11 Paramount

Channel Width: 400′ River Bottom: 300′



12 Long Beach

Channel Width: 600′ River Bottom: 495′



San Fernando Valley
Glendale Narrows
Downtown Los Angeles
Study Area
Maywood 6
Bell / Bell Gardens 7/8
Cudahy 9
South Gate 10
Paramount
Long Beach
1
2
3
4
5
11
12

6 Maywood
Photo credit: Google Earth 2016

7/8 Bell / Bell Gardens
Photo credit: Google Earth 2016

9 Cudahy
Photo credit: Google Earth 2016

10 South Gate
Photo credit: Google Earth 2016

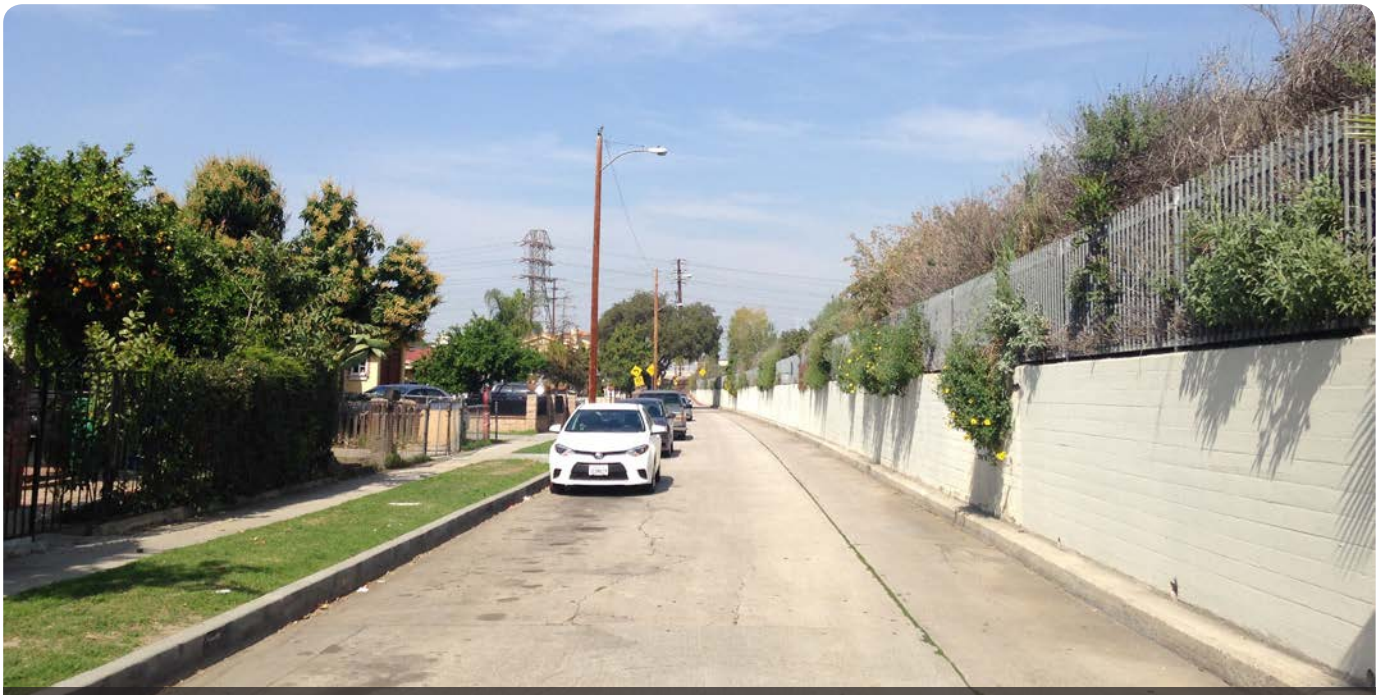
11 Paramount
Photo credit: Google Earth 2016

12 Long Beach
Photo credit: Google Earth 2016

Land-Use Characteristics

From its beginnings at the confluence of Bell Creek and Arroyo Calabasas to its terminus near the Port of Los Angeles in Long Beach, the Los Angeles River passes through several types of neighborhoods and has geomorphological changes that affect the river's width and its physical characteristics. Low density residential areas adjacent to the river are common in many of the communities along the river. In areas of the San Fernando Valley such as Canoga Park and Sherman Oaks, residential zones around the river have an even distribution of adequately sized parks and open spaces. Where the river turns southward in Glendale, it is surrounded by Griffith Park, a large regional park totaling almost 4500 acres (see Figure 3.2) (LA Parks, 2015).

In contrast, communities in the study region adjacent to the river have limited parks and open spaces due to higher land use density and unequal distribution of recreation spaces. Some areas along the river, such as downtown Los Angeles and Vernon, are characterized by heavy industrial land uses (see Figure 3.2). These areas, in contrast to residential zones, have increased stormwater runoff due to higher percentages of impervious ground cover. Often they contain higher levels of waterborne pollutants because of manufacturing practices. The study region is greatly impacted by polluted runoff during storm events, compared to other communities north and east of downtown Los Angeles.



The river in the study region is separated from residential neighborhoods by tall levee walls, seen here along River Drive in the City of Bell.

The Los Angeles River as it passes from the City of Bell into Cudahy.

STUDY REGION CHALLENGES

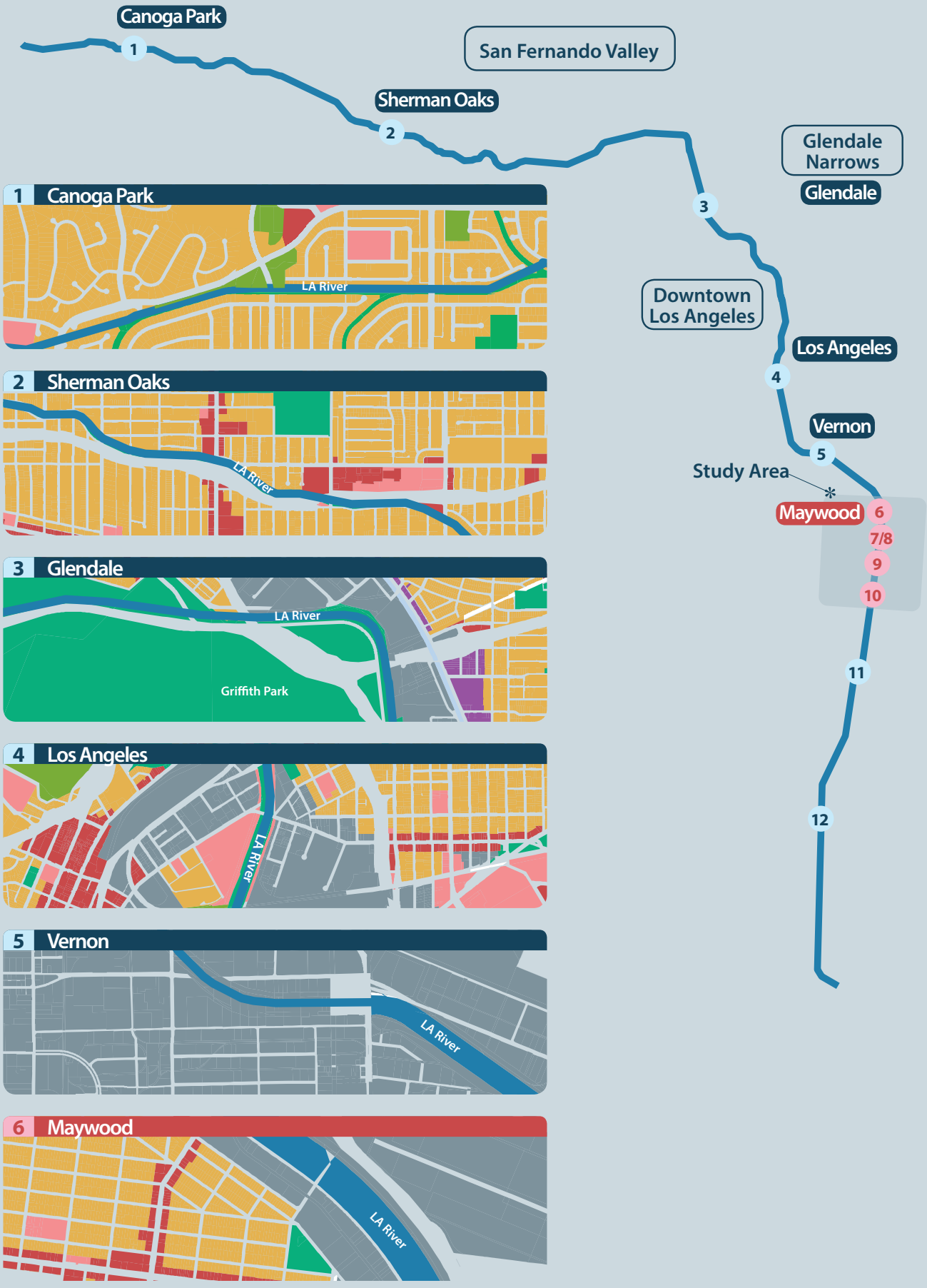
Culture and Language

As earlier stated, there are many cultural, environmental, and social challenges affecting this region. First, the region is predominately Latino which is non-reflective of most design professionals working in the local community. In the study region, 30.0% of the population are non-English speakers which is a challenge for communication.

Socio-Economic

Second, the region is characterized by low educational attainment. 52.6% of the region's population over the age of 25 do not have a high school degree or equivalent compared with 25% for Los Angeles County and 20% for the State of California (see Map 3.4). Generally, people with lower levels of education are less likely to engage in participatory processes or express their opinions through the political system (Dee, 2004), and as such, have less of a voice in decision-making (U.S. Census: American Community Survey (ACS), 2015; OEHHA CalEnviroScreen 2.0). Lower levels of educational attainment also have a negative effect on income. The region has a lower median household income than the rest of the county with many residents living in poverty. In the State of California, the median household income is approximately $60,000 per year, compared with $56,000 for Los Angeles County, and only $43,000 in the study region (see Map 3.5). Because of low income, the region has a high rate of poverty with 59.6% of the population living below the poverty line compared to 40% in Los Angeles County and 35% in California (see Map 3.6). Similarly, unemployment in this region is higher than other parts of the county (see Map 3.7).

Figure 3.3 Zoning by City



San Fernando Valley
Glendale Narrows
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Study Area
Bell / Bell Gardens
Cudahy
South Gate
Paramount
Long Beach
1
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7/8
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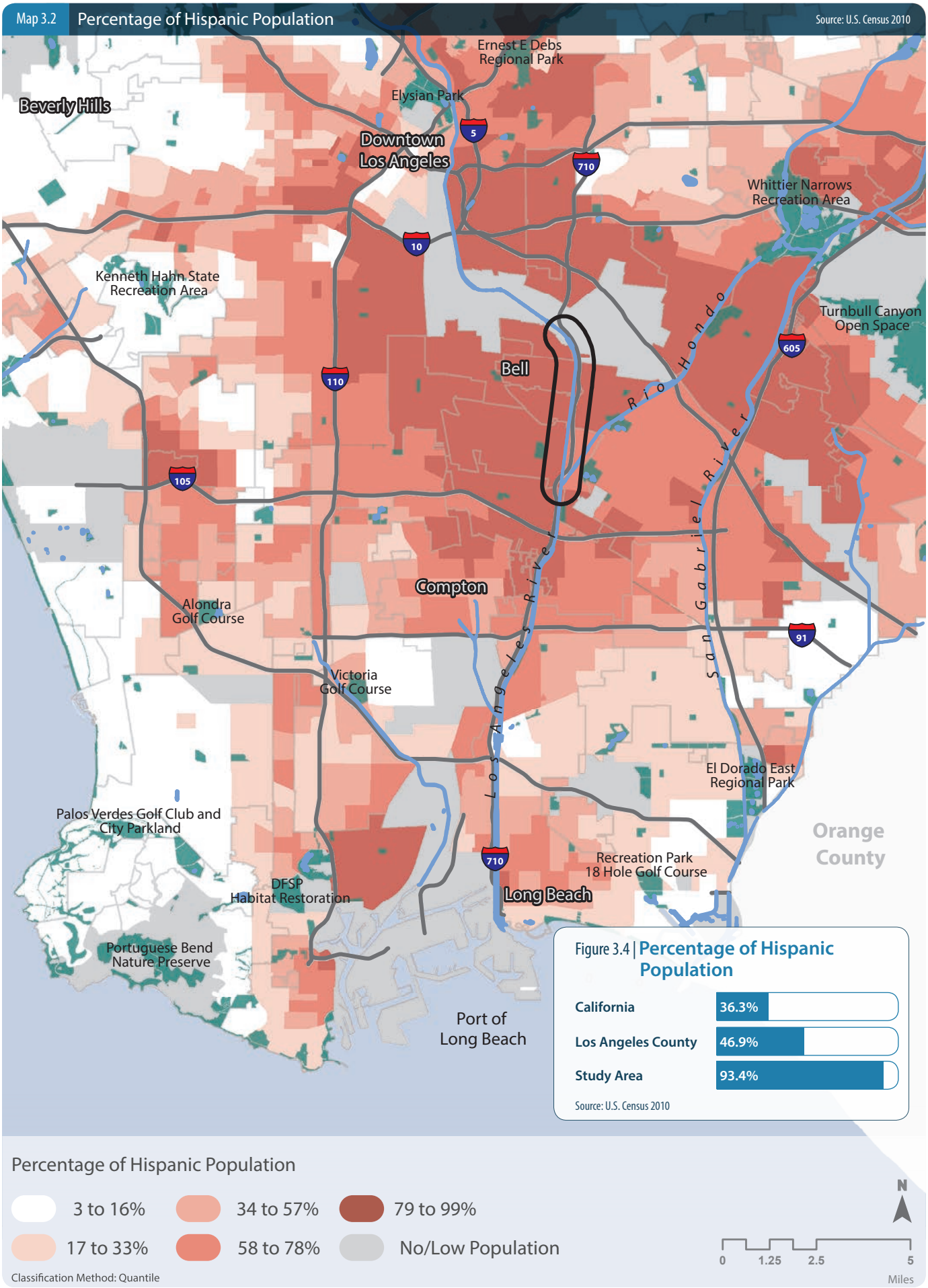
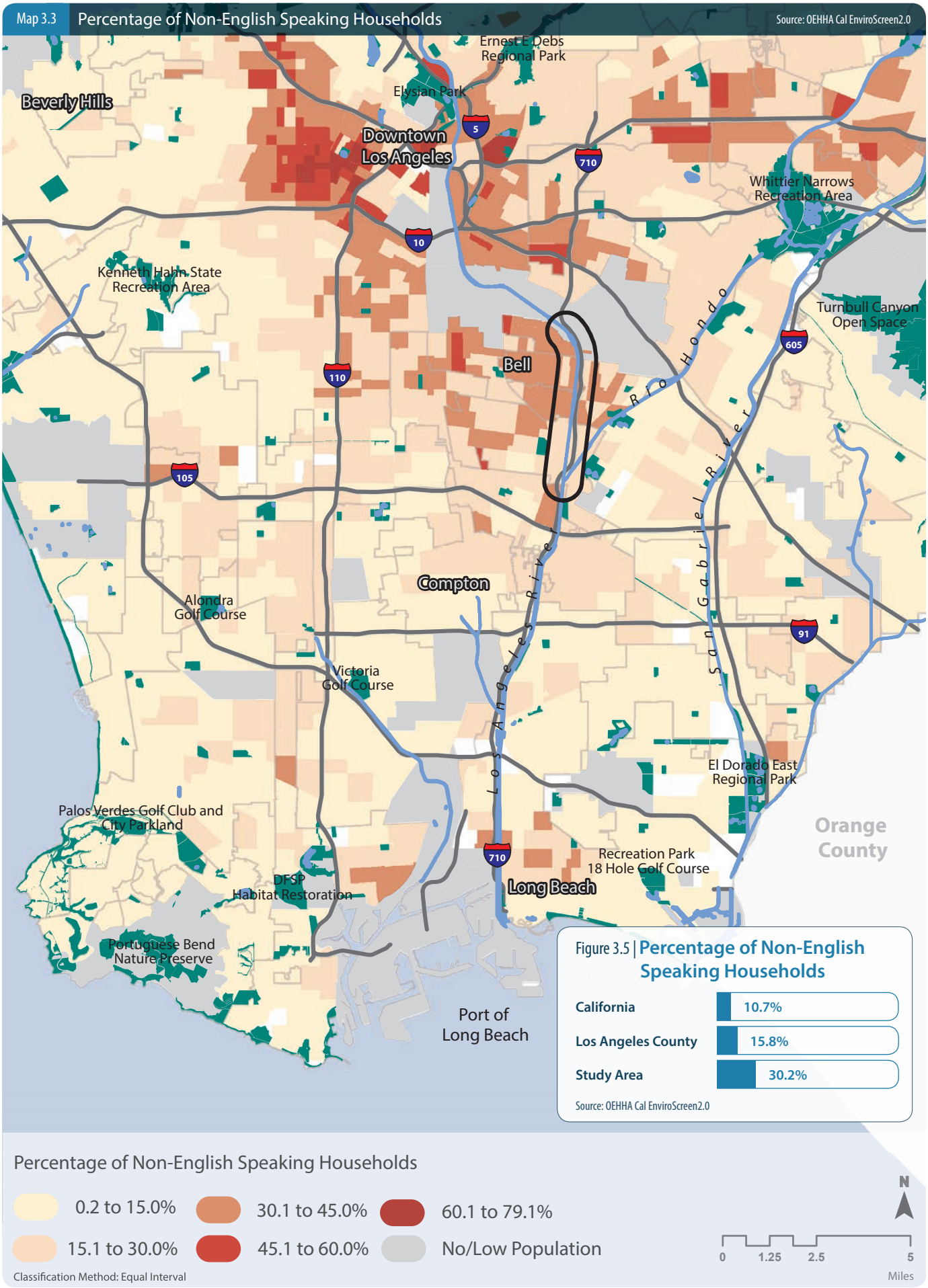
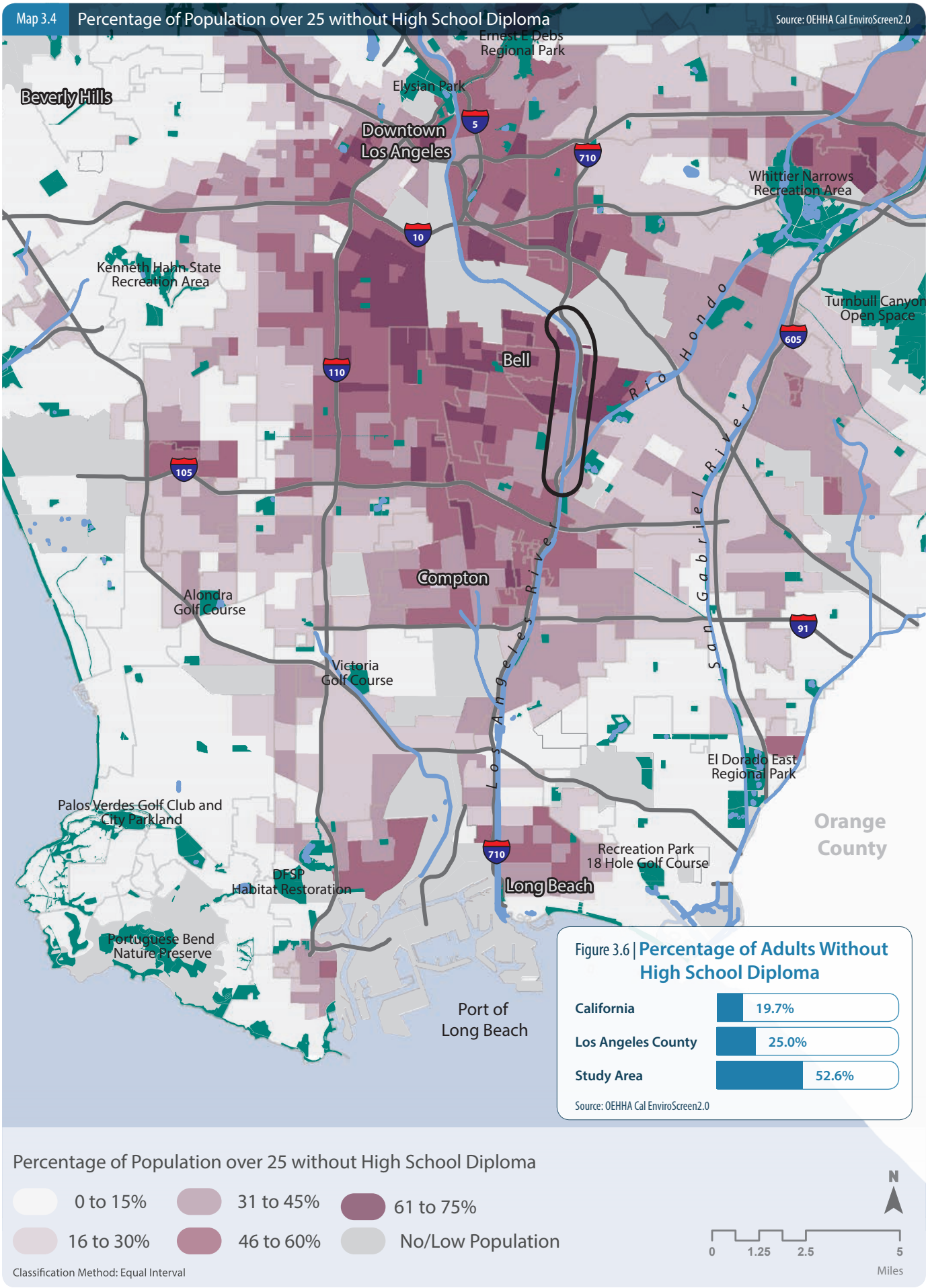
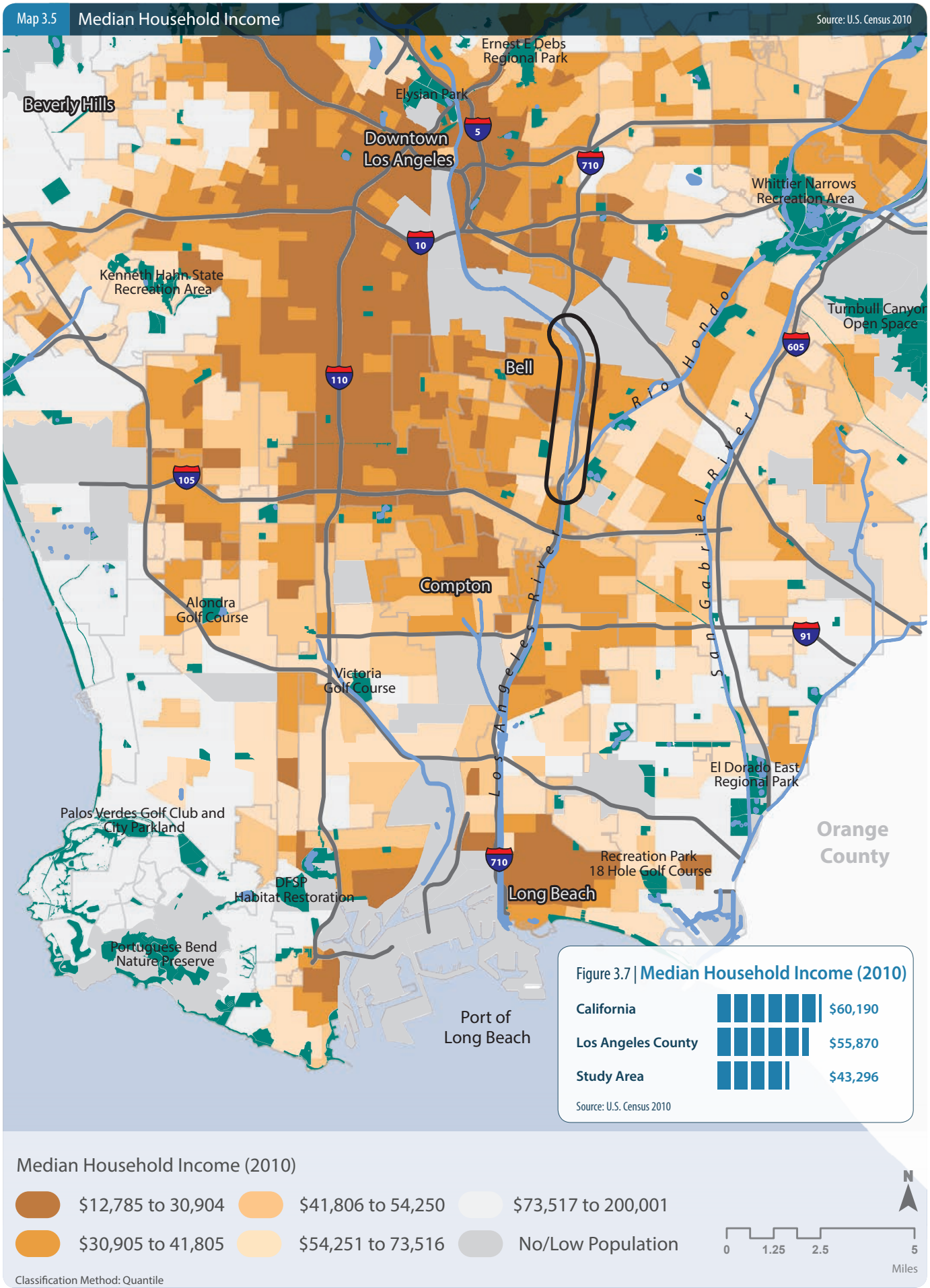
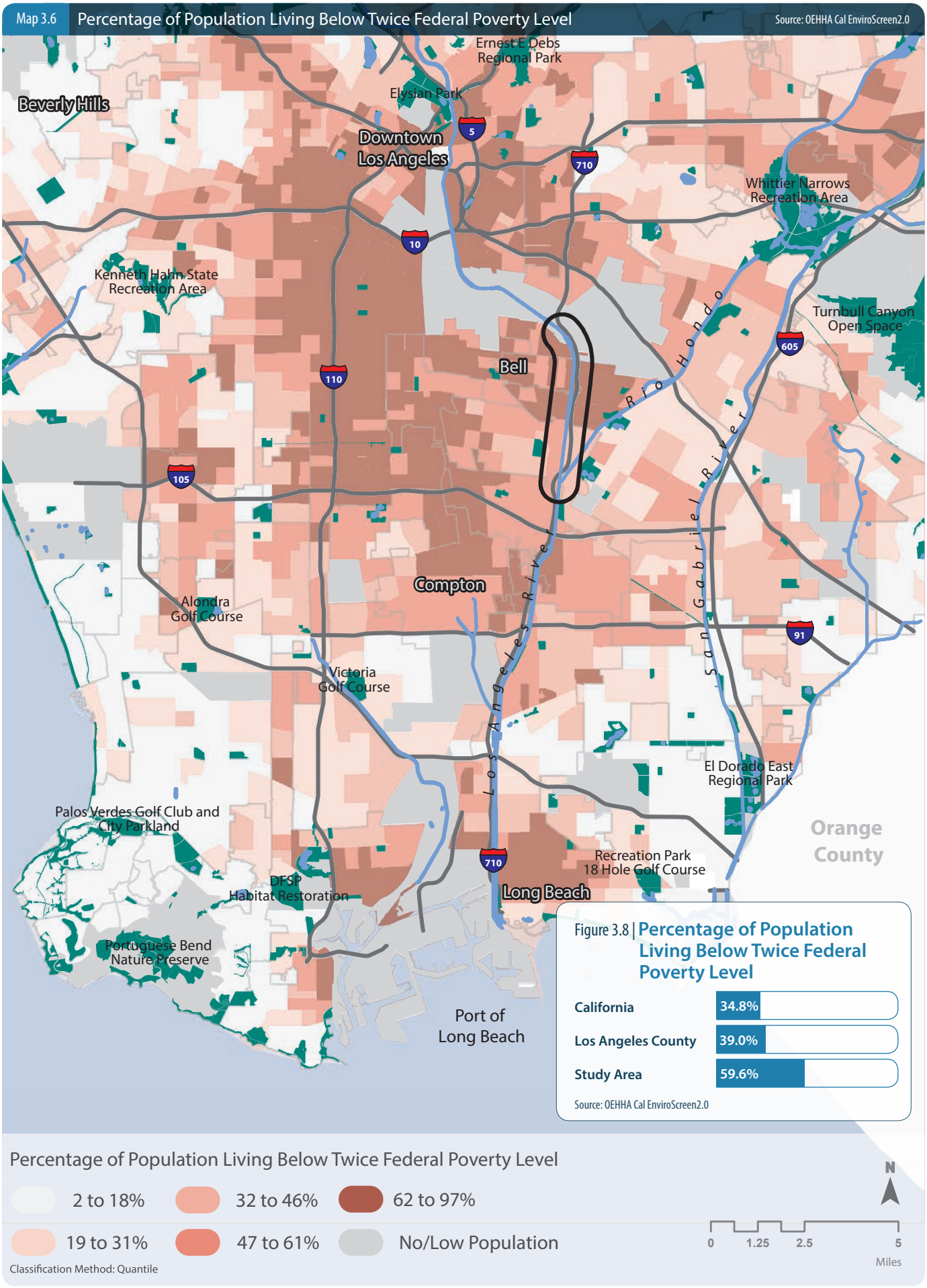
11
12
7 Bell
8 Bell Gardens
9 Cudahy
10 South Gate
11 Paramount
12 Long Beach
LA River
Residential
Commercial
Agricultural
Industrial
Mixed Use
Open Space
Public Facility
Planned Development
Unzoned

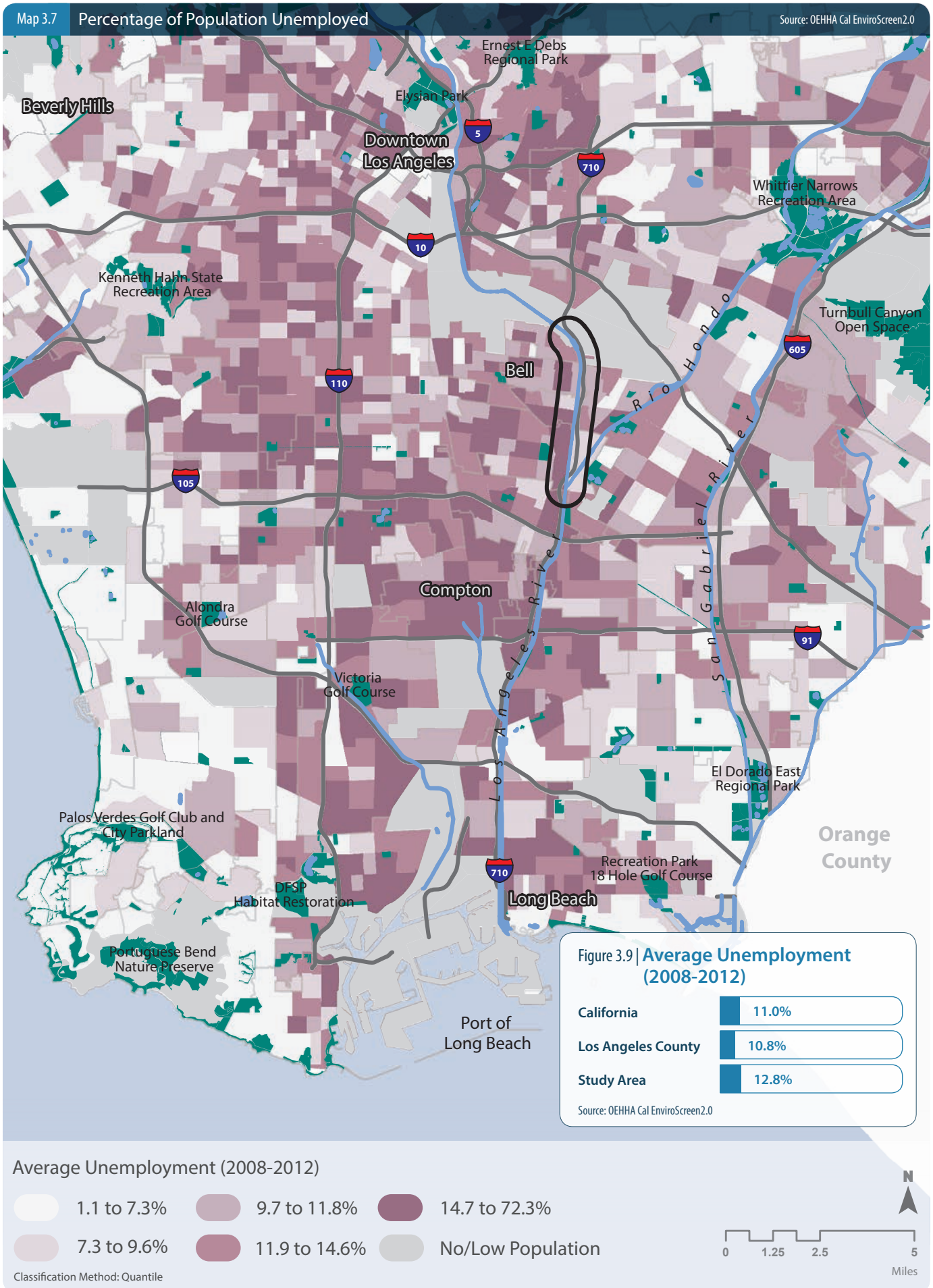

Map 3.2
Percentage of Hispanic Population
Source: U.S. Census 2010
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
710
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.4 | Percentage of Hispanic Population
California 36.3%
Los Angeles County 46.9%
Study Area 93.4%
Source: U.S. Census 2010
Percentage of Hispanic Population
3 to 16%
17 to 33%
34 to 57%
58 to 78%
79 to 99%
No/Low Population
Classification Method: Quantile
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles


Map 3.3 Percentage of Non-English Speaking Households
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
710
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.5 | Percentage of Non-English Speaking Households
California 10.7%
Los Angeles County 15.8%
Study Area 30.2%
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Percentage of Non-English Speaking Households
0.2 to 15.0%
15.1 to 30.0%
30.1 to 45.0%
45.1 to 60.0%
60.1 to 79.1%
No/Low Population
Classification Method: Equal Interval
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles


Map 3.4 Percentage of Population over 25 without High School Diploma
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
710
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.6 | Percentage of Adults Without High School Diploma
California 19.7%
Los Angeles County 25.0%
Study Area 52.6%
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Percentage of Population over 25 without High School Diploma
0 to 15%
16 to 30%
31 to 45%
46 to 60%
61 to 75%
No/Low Population
Classification Method: Equal Interval
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles


Map 3.5 Median Household Income
Source: U.S. Census 2010
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Orange County
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
710
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.7 | Median Household Income (2010)
California $60,190
Los Angeles County $55,870
Study Area $43,296
Source: U.S. Census 2010
Median Household Income (2010)
$12,785 to 30,904
$30,905 to 41,805
$41,806 to 54,250
$54,251 to 73,516
$73,517 to 200,001
No/Low Population
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
Classification Method: Quantile


Map 3.6
Percentage of Population Living Below Twice Federal Poverty Level
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
Bell
Rio Hondo
San Gabriel River
Los Angeles River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
Victoria Golf Course
El Dorado East Regional Park
Orange County
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
5
710
10
110
105
605
91
Figure 3.8 | Percentage of Population Living Below Twice Federal Poverty Level
California 34.8%
Los Angeles County 39.0%
Study Area 59.6%
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Percentage of Population Living Below Twice Federal Poverty Level
2 to 18%
19 to 31%
32 to 46%
47 to 61%
62 to 97%
No/Low Population
Classification Method: Quantile
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles

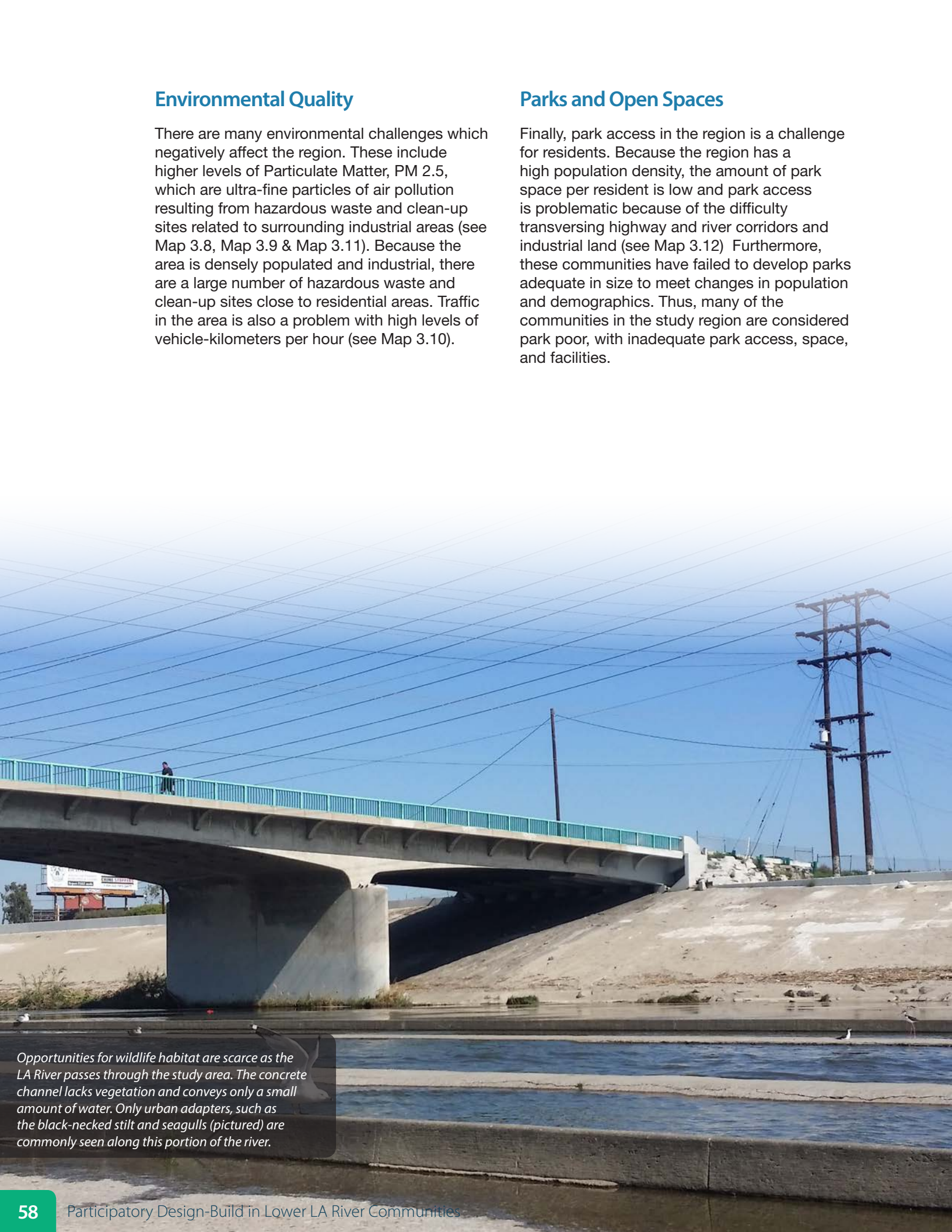

Map 3.7 Percentage of Population Unemployed
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.9 | Average Unemployment (2008-2012)
California 11.0%
Los Angeles County 10.8%
Study Area 12.8%
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Average Unemployment (2008-2012)
1.1 to 7.3%
7.3 to 9.6%
9.7 to 11.8%
11.9 to 14.6%
14.7 to 72.3%
No/Low Population
Classification Method: Quantile
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles

Environmental Quality

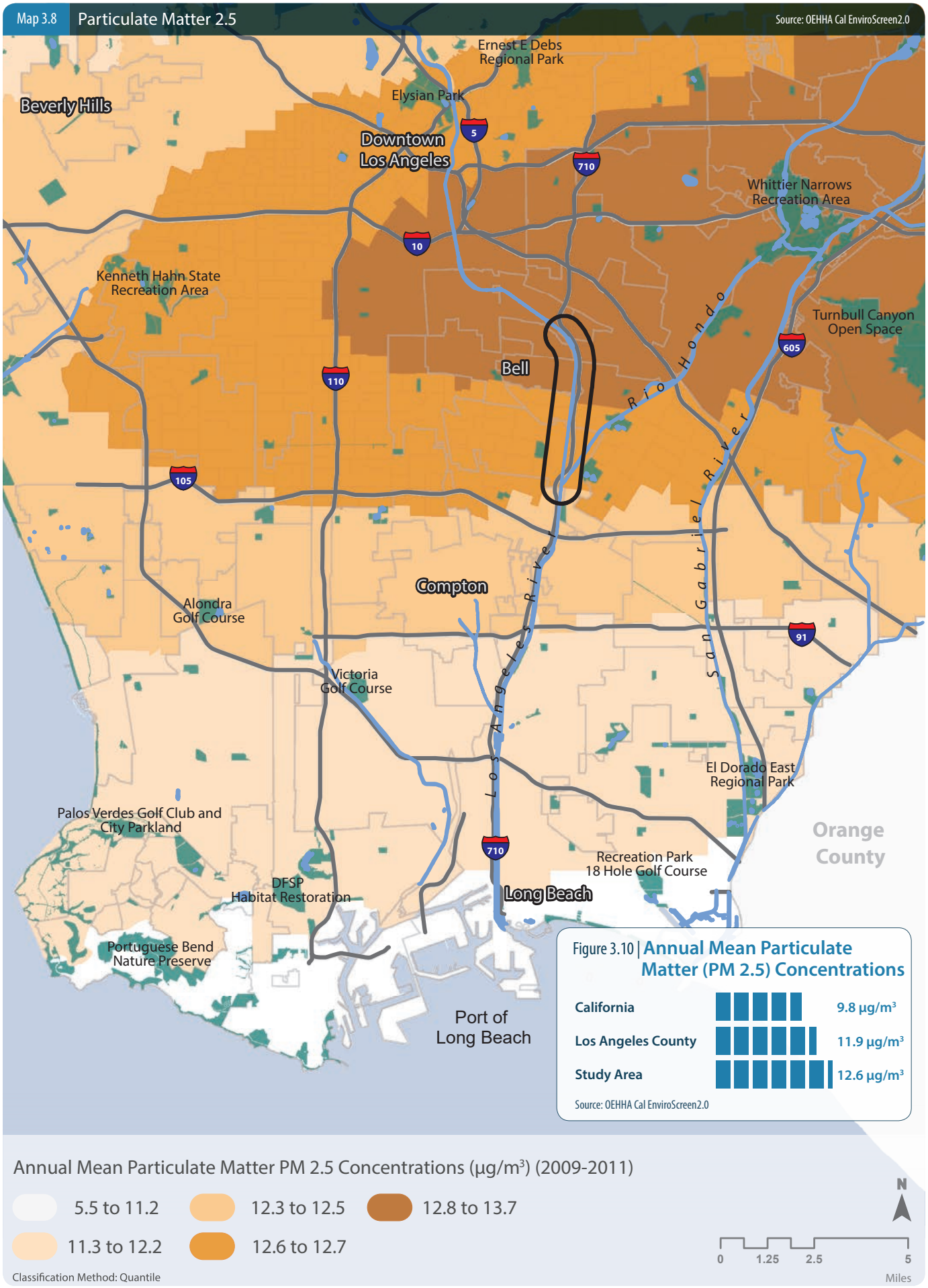
There are many environmental challenges which negatively affect the region. These include higher levels of Particulate Matter, PM 2.5, which are ultra-fine particles of air pollution resulting from hazardous waste and clean-up sites related to surrounding industrial areas (see Map 3.8, Map 3.9 & Map 3.11). Because the area is densely populated and industrial, there are a large number of hazardous waste and clean-up sites close to residential areas. Traffic in the area is also a problem with high levels of vehicle-kilometers per hour (see Map 3.10).

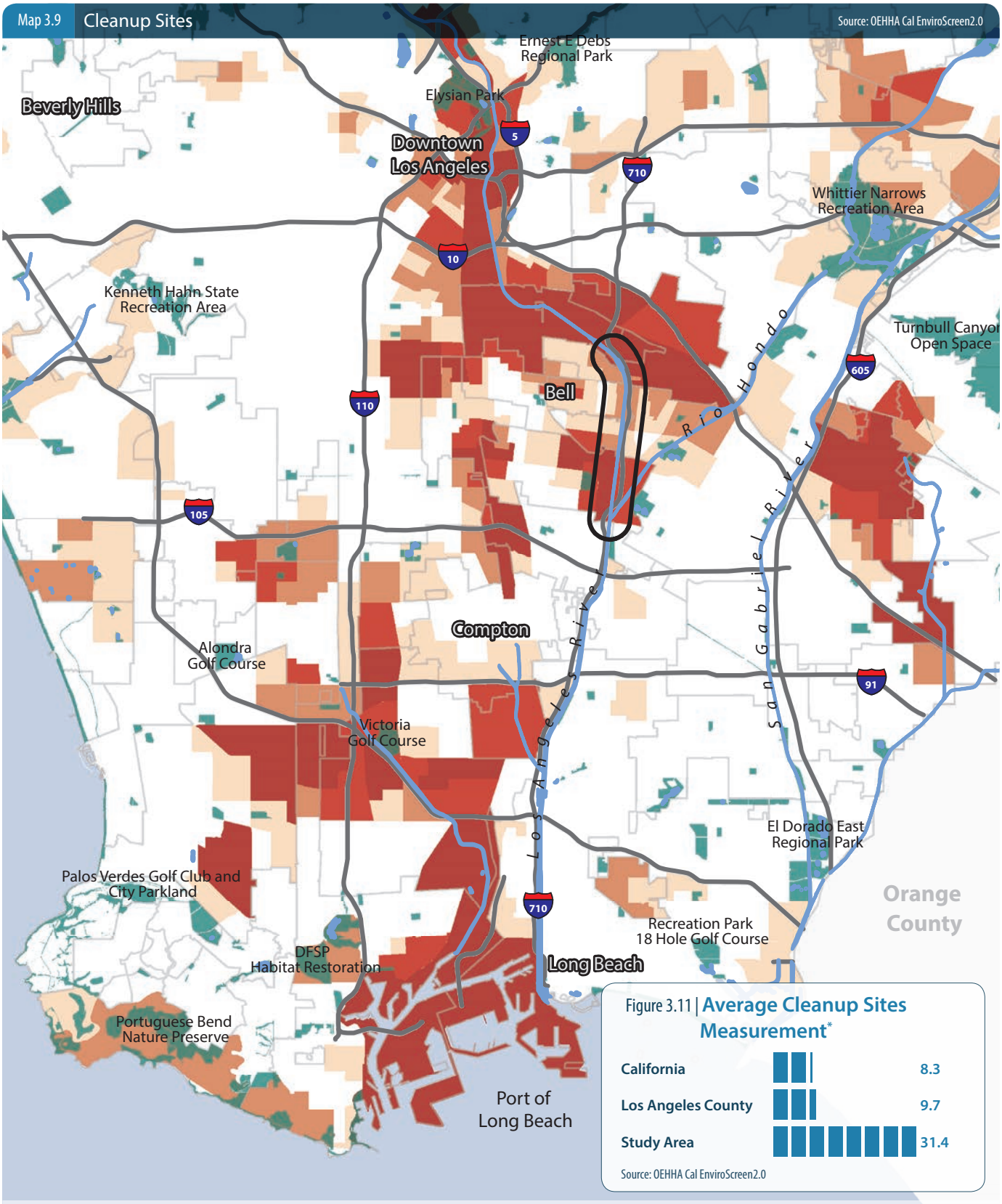
Parks and Open Spaces

Finally, park access in the region is a challenge for residents. Because the region has a high population density, the amount of park space per resident is low and park access is problematic because of the difficulty transversing highway and river corridors and industrial land (see Map 3.12) Furthermore, these communities have failed to develop parks adequate in size to meet changes in population and demographics. Thus, many of the communities in the study region are considered park poor, with inadequate park access, space, and facilities.

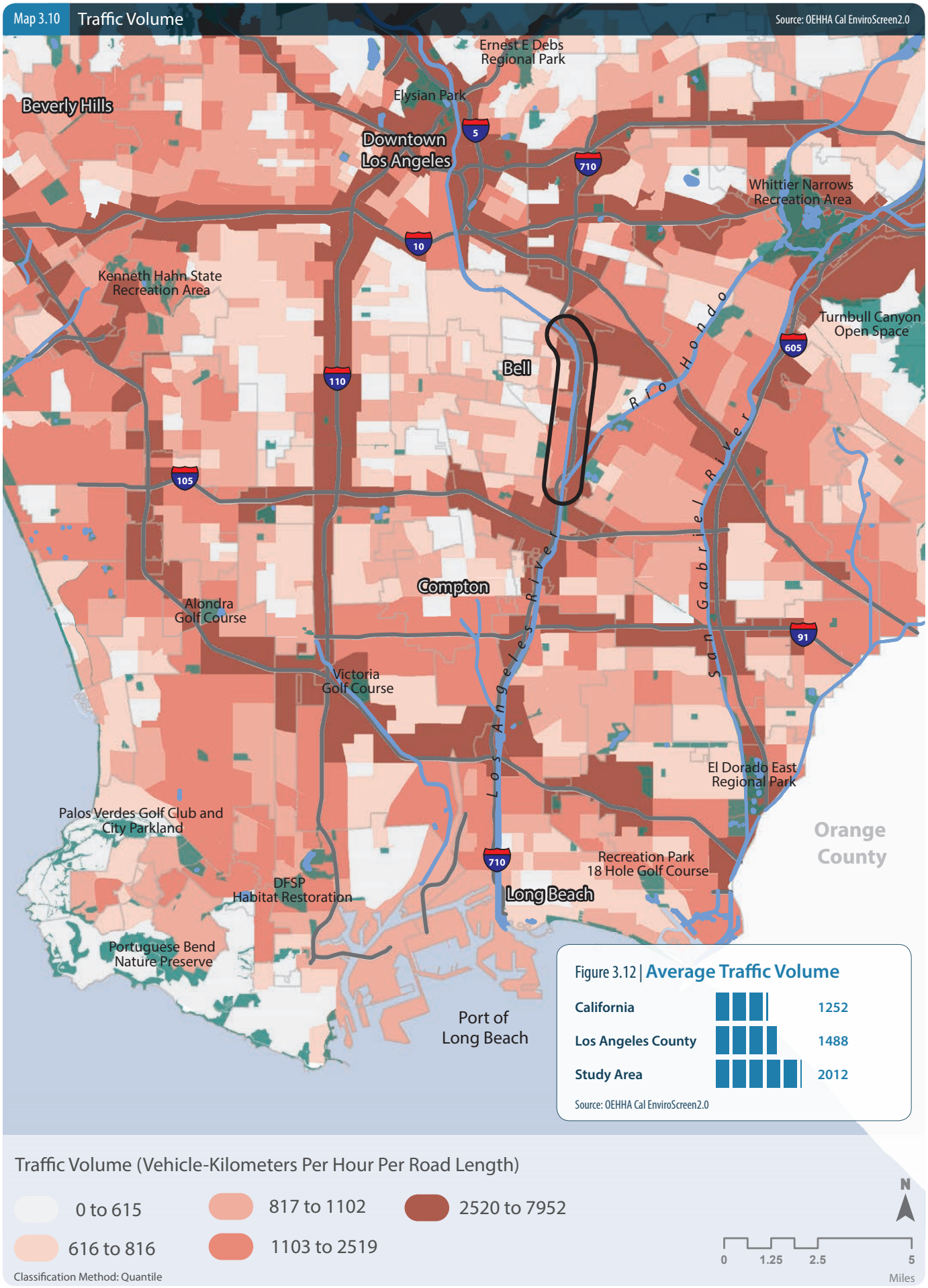


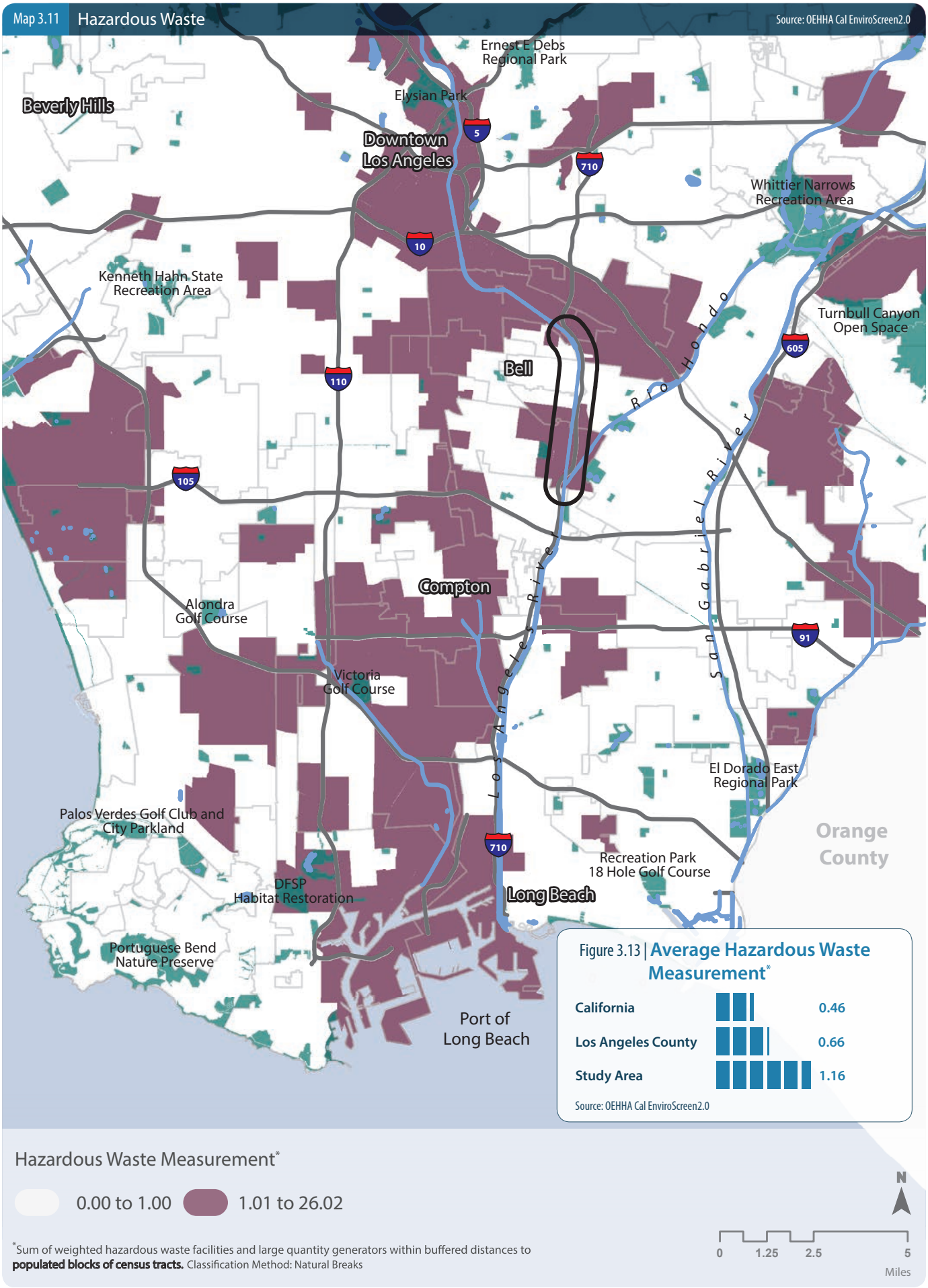
Opportunities for wildlife habitat are scarce as the LA River passes through the study area. The concrete channel lacks vegetation and conveys only a small amount of water. Only urban adapters, such as the black-necked stilt and seagulls (pictured) are commonly seen along this portion of the river.

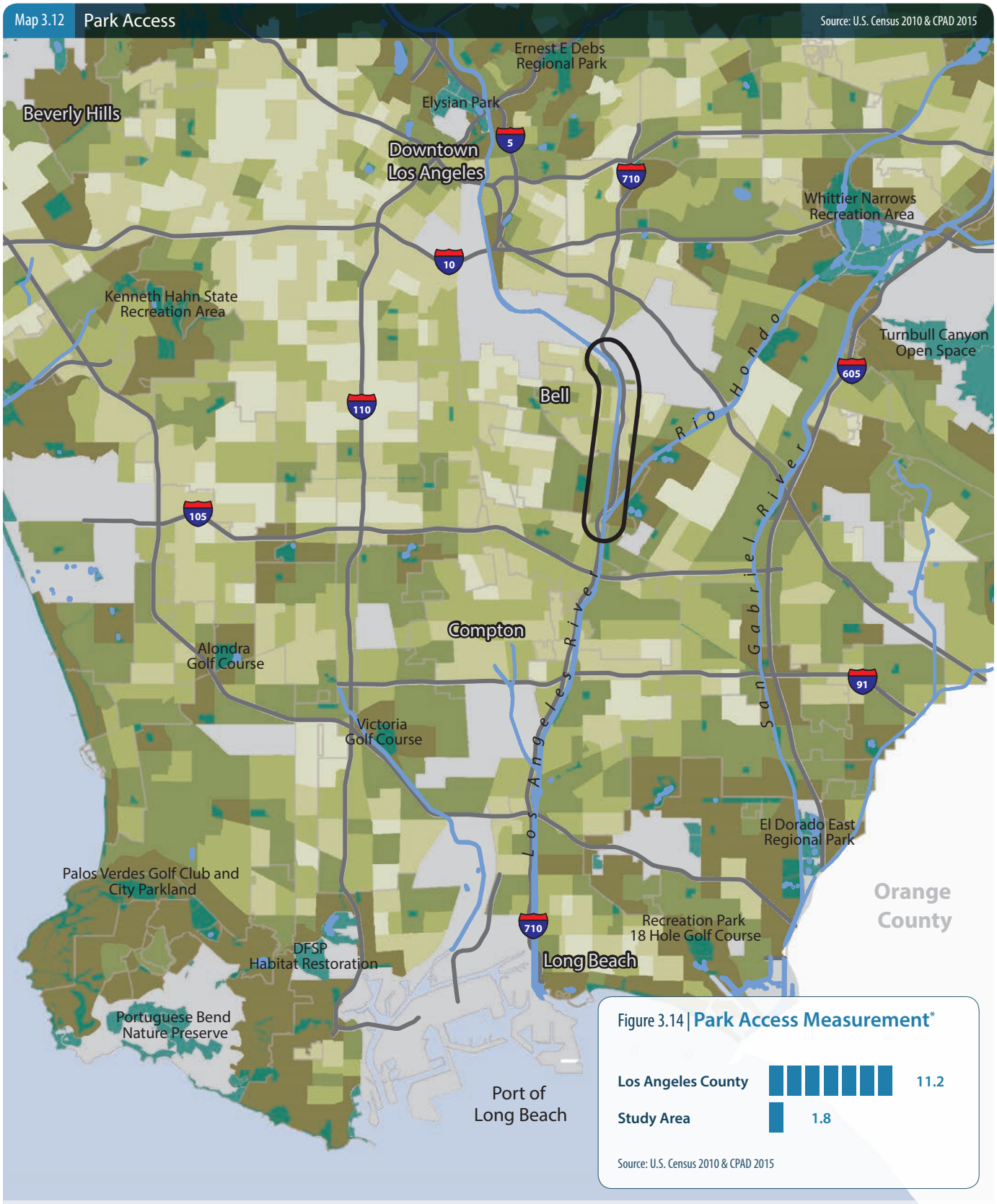

Map 3.8
Particulate Matter 2.5
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
710
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.10 | Annual Mean Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) Concentrations
California 9.8 µg/m³
Los Angeles County 11.9 µg/m³
Study Area 12.6 µg/m³
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Annual Mean Particulate Matter PM 2.5 Concentrations (µg/m³) (2009-2011)
5.5 to 11.2
11.3 to 12.2
12.3 to 12.5
12.6 to 12.7
12.8 to 13.7
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
Classification Method: Quantile



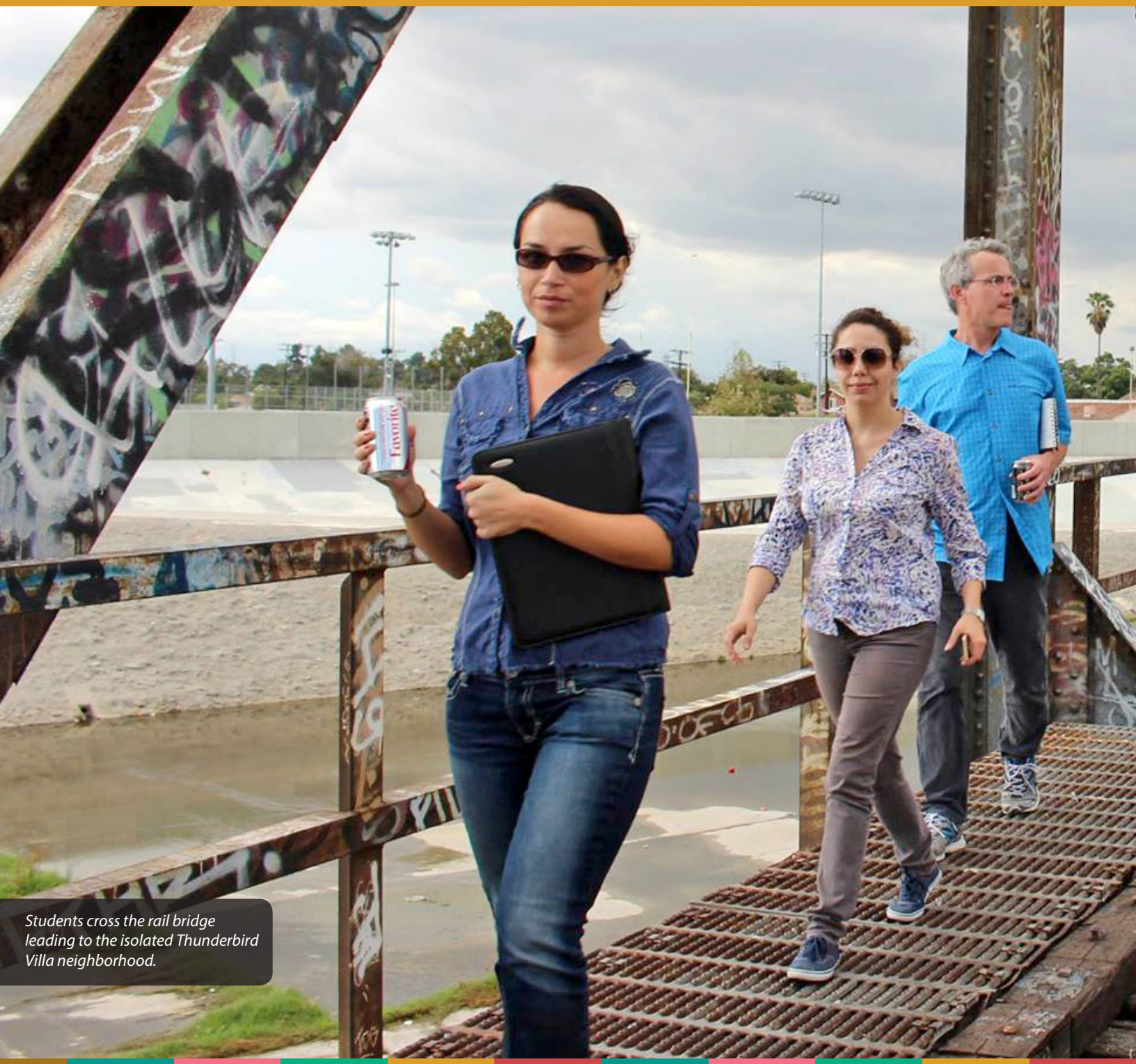
*Cleanup sites, sum of weighted EnviroStor cleanup sites within buffered distances to populated blocks of census tracts. Classification Method: Modified Equal Interval


Map 3.10 Traffic Volume
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
710
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.12 | Average Traffic Volume
California 1252
Los Angeles County 1488
Study Area 2012
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Traffic Volume (Vehicle-Kilometers Per Hour Per Road Length)
0 to 615
616 to 816
817 to 1102
1103 to 2519
2520 to 7952
Classification Method: Quantile
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles

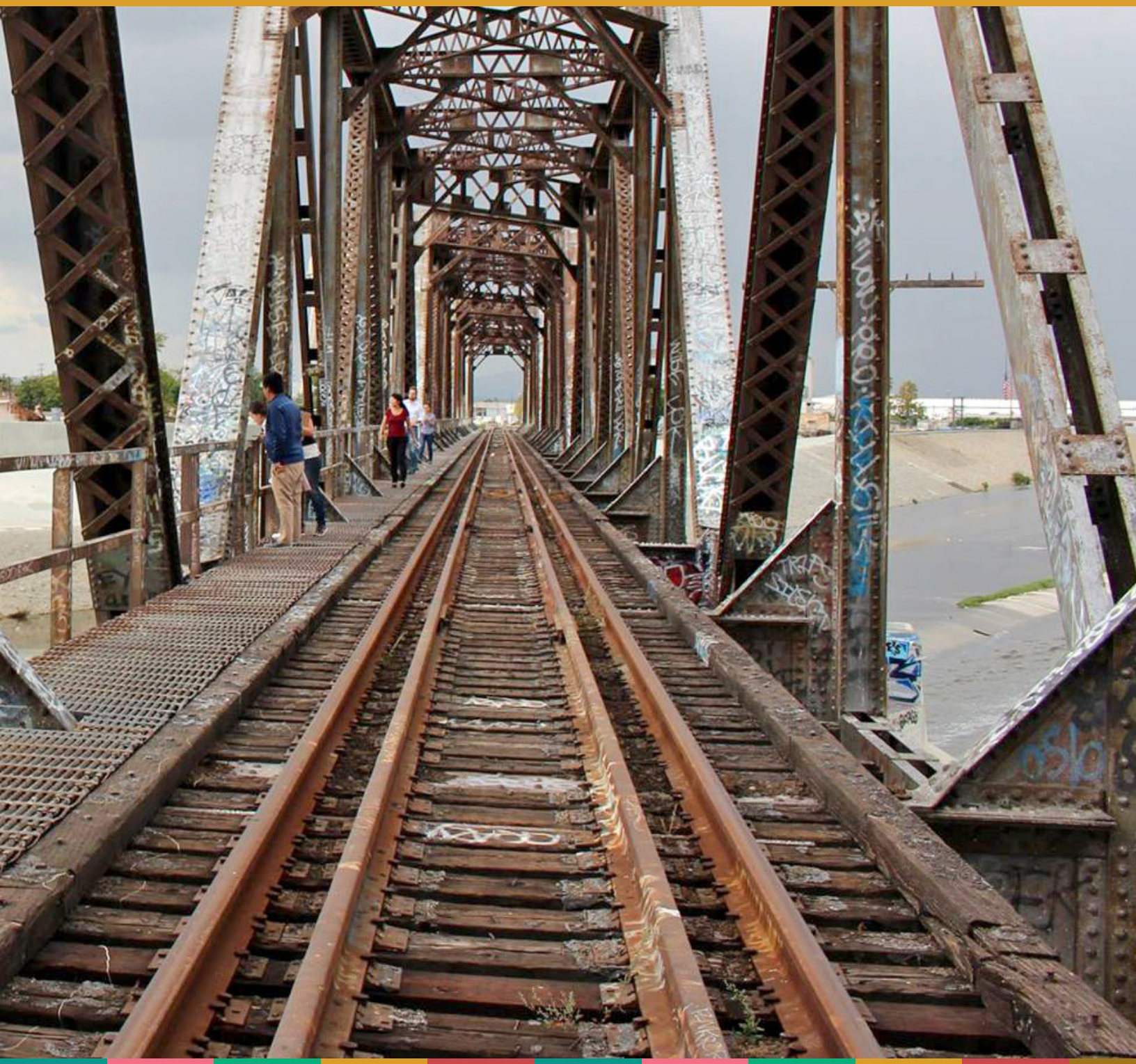

Map 3.11 Hazardous Waste
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
710
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.13 | Average Hazardous Waste Measurement*
California 0.46
Los Angeles County 0.66
Study Area 1.16
Source: OEHHA Cal EnviroScreen2.0
Hazardous Waste Measurement*
0.00 to 1.00
1.01 to 26.02
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
*Sum of weighted hazardous waste facilities and large quantity generators within buffered distances to populated blocks of census tracts. Classification Method: Natural Breaks


Map 3.12 Park Access
Source: U.S. Census 2010 & CPAD 2015
Ernest E Debs Regional Park
Elysian Park
Beverly Hills
Downtown Los Angeles
5
710
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
10
Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area
Turnbull Canyon Open Space
605
Bell
110
Rio Hondo
105
San Gabriel River
Compton
Alondra Golf Course
91
Victoria Golf Course
Los Angeles River
El Dorado East Regional Park
Palos Verdes Golf Club and City Parkland
Orange County
Recreation Park 18 Hole Golf Course
710
DFSP Habitat Restoration
Long Beach
Portuguese Bend Nature Preserve
Port of Long Beach
Figure 3.14 | Park Access Measurement*
Los Angeles County 11.2
Study Area 1.8
Source: U.S. Census 2010 & CPAD 2015
Park Access Measurement*
0.00 to 0.05
0.06 to 0.49
6.55 to 487.09
0.50 to 1.50
1.51 to 6.54
No/Low Population
N
0 1.25 2.5 5
Miles
*Acres per Thousand Residents Within a 1/4 Mile Radius (see Appendix E for Data Analysis). Classification Method: Quantile

NEIGHBORHOOD SELECTION



Students cross the rail bridge leading to the isolated Thunderbird Villa neighborhood.



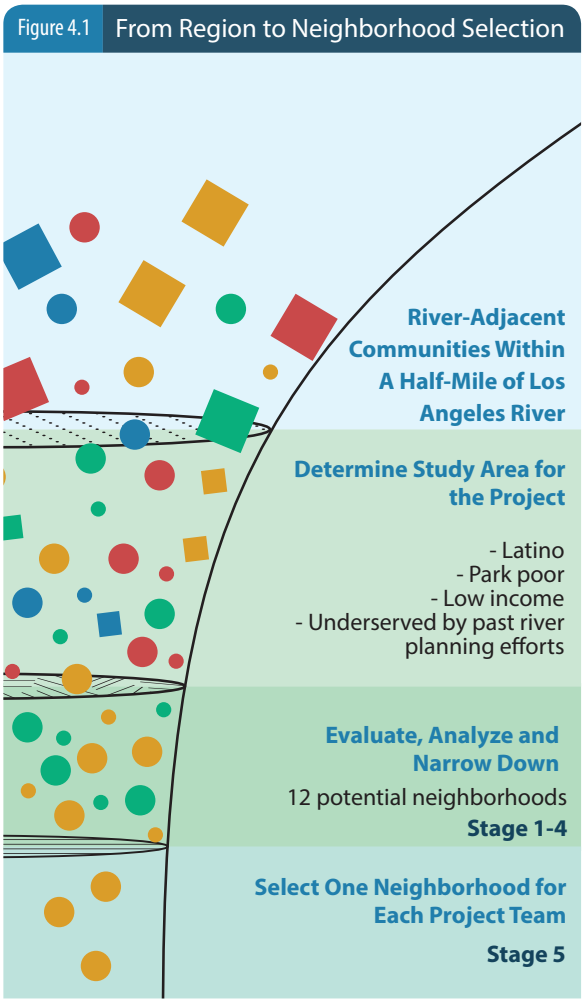
NEIGHBORHOOD SELECTION PROCESS

4.1

The study area includes four miles of urban land adjacent to the Los Angeles River, stretching a half mile from the river's banks and totaling roughly 3000 acres (see Map 4.1). As discussed in the previous section, the study area is characterized by low income, predominantly Hispanic communities, with high population density and high level of park poverty. Taking into consideration the project's focus on working intimately with disadvantaged communities at the neighborhood scale, the 606 Studio developed a list of carefully selected criteria to identify specific neighborhoods for community engagement efforts. The 606 Studio is split into three project teams to investigate the study area and identify potential neighborhoods.

The process of neighborhood selection was an iterative process where teams refined the steps based on field work. This process occurred in five stages:

Figure 4.1 From Region to Neighborhood Selection



STAGE 1 Preliminary investigation of large unused vacant lots (by the 606 Studio)

STAGE 2 Investigation of neighborhoods with unused open available land (by the 606 Studio)

STAGE 3 Investigation of neighborhoods with unused open available land and specific neighborhood characteristics (by the 606 Studio)

STAGE 4 Identification and evaluation of 12 potential neighborhoods (by each project team)

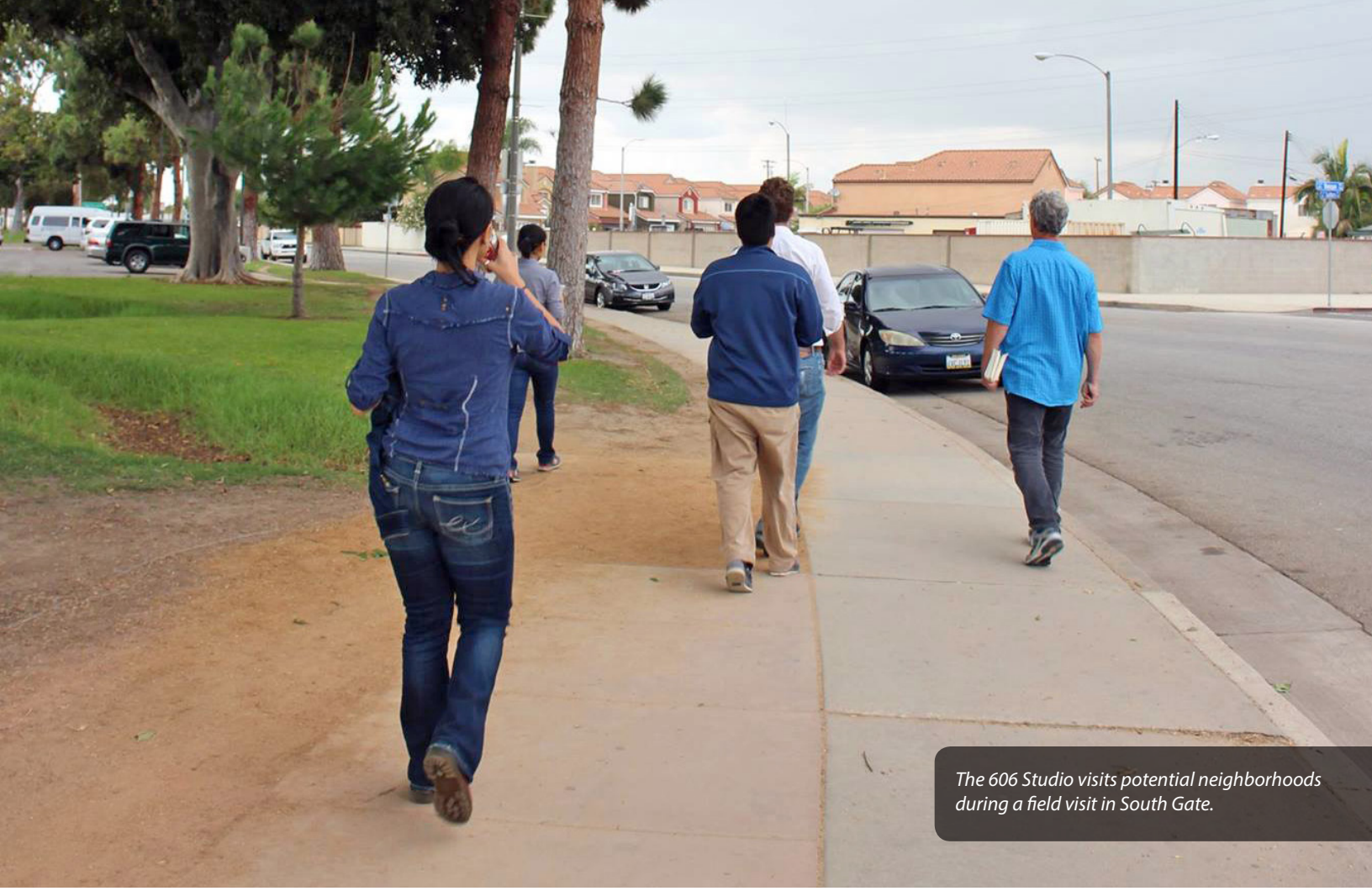
STAGE 5 Development of final selection criteria and selection of final neighborhoods (by each project team)

Finally, the 606 Studio selected three final project neighborhoods, one for each project team.

The 606 Studio visited areas of interest along the Los Angeles River corridor (Stage 1). Areas of interest were first defined as large vacant unused open spaces along the Los Angeles River corridor. However, it soon became evident that looking for "large unused vacant lots" was an insufficient way to select a project neighborhood. Then, the 606 Studio examined neighborhoods with unused open available land and removed sites that were not part of a residential neighborhood (Stage 2). Then the 606 Studio investigated neighborhoods with unused open available land and specific neighborhood characteristics such as:

- Sense of community
- Frequency of front yard use for social or recreational activities or leisure pursuits
- Presence of neighborhood anchors
- Level of street and sidewalk activity
- Welcoming and friendly nature of the neighborhood
- Sense of connection to the Los Angeles River (Stage 3).

The 606 Studio utilized these criteria to develop a list of 12 potential sites (Stage 4). Finally, each of the project teams created a unique set of criteria, which they used to evaluate the 12 sites (Stage 5), leading to the final selection of one neighborhood for each project team. The selected neighborhoods were named by the residents as Bell del Río, La Santana, and Thunderbird Villa.



The 606 Studio visits potential neighborhoods during a field visit in South Gate.

The 606 Studio gathers at a local fish market in South Gate to compare potential neighborhoods.

Figure 4.2 Neighborhood Selection Process

Identified Unused Vacant Lots in the Study Area

Preliminary Investigation of Large Unused Vacant Lots

Ground-Truthed with Field Visits

Identified Neighborhoods with Open Available Land

Investigation of Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land

Revised Criteria for Unused Open Available Land

Developed Criteria for Neighborhood Selection

Investigation of Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land and Specific Neighborhood Characteristics

Reviewed Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land

STAGE 1

STAGE 2

STAGE 3

Open Space Categories

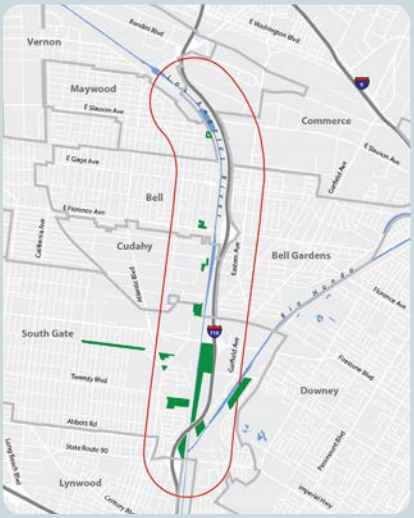
- Brownfields
- Large vacant industrial fields
- Underutilized spaces along industrial zone
- Underutilized parks adjacent to the Los Angeles River
- Large private empty lots

Open Space Categories

- Sidewalks
- Medians
- Dead-ends
- Underutilized parking lots
- Small underutilized public spaces

Neighborhood Characteristics

- Sense of community
- Frequency of front yard use
- Presence of neighborhood anchors
- Level of street activity
- Welcoming and friendly nature of the neighborhood
- Sense of connection to the Los Angles River



Neighborhood Boundaries Overlap

Each Project Team Prioritized Selection Criteria

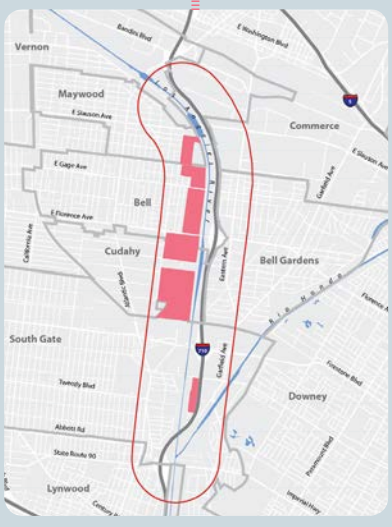
Development of Final Selection Criteria and Selection of Final Neighborhood

Identification and Evaluation of 12 Potential Neighborhoods

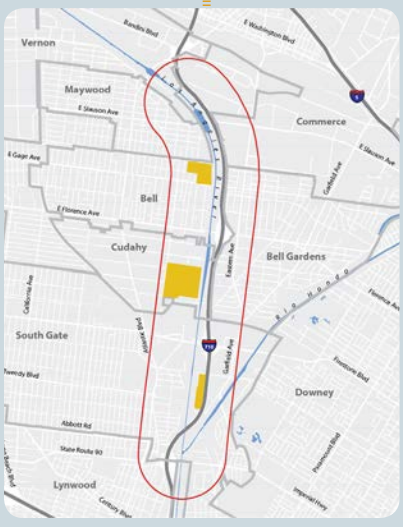
Shortlisted Neighborhoods for Initial Consideration

Revised Selection Criteria and Final Selection

STAGE 4 — **STAGE 5** — **Final Selection**



Neighborhood Boundaries Overlap



STAGE 1

Preliminary Investigation of Large Unused Vacant Lots

The 606 Studio reviewed the region using GIS and aerial images and performed multiple field visits to the study area to search for large unused vacant lots. Several types of open spaces were identified along the Los Angeles River corridor including bridges, informal trails, berms and power line easements. Multiple large unused vacant lots were visited (see Map 4.1), including vacant land near existing parks, abandoned railway tracks, private and public empty lots, access points to the Los Angeles River, unused school fields, proposed locations for future park projects, and unused industrial lots. The visited spaces were evaluated based on their proximity to the Los Angeles River and potential to be used for a community-based improvement project. The 606 Studio created an interactive map to document the locations visited through shared photographs and field notes.

The problem with this approach was that many of these spaces were in industrial areas, far from communities. The 606 Studio decided that a new way of approaching neighborhood selection was necessary.

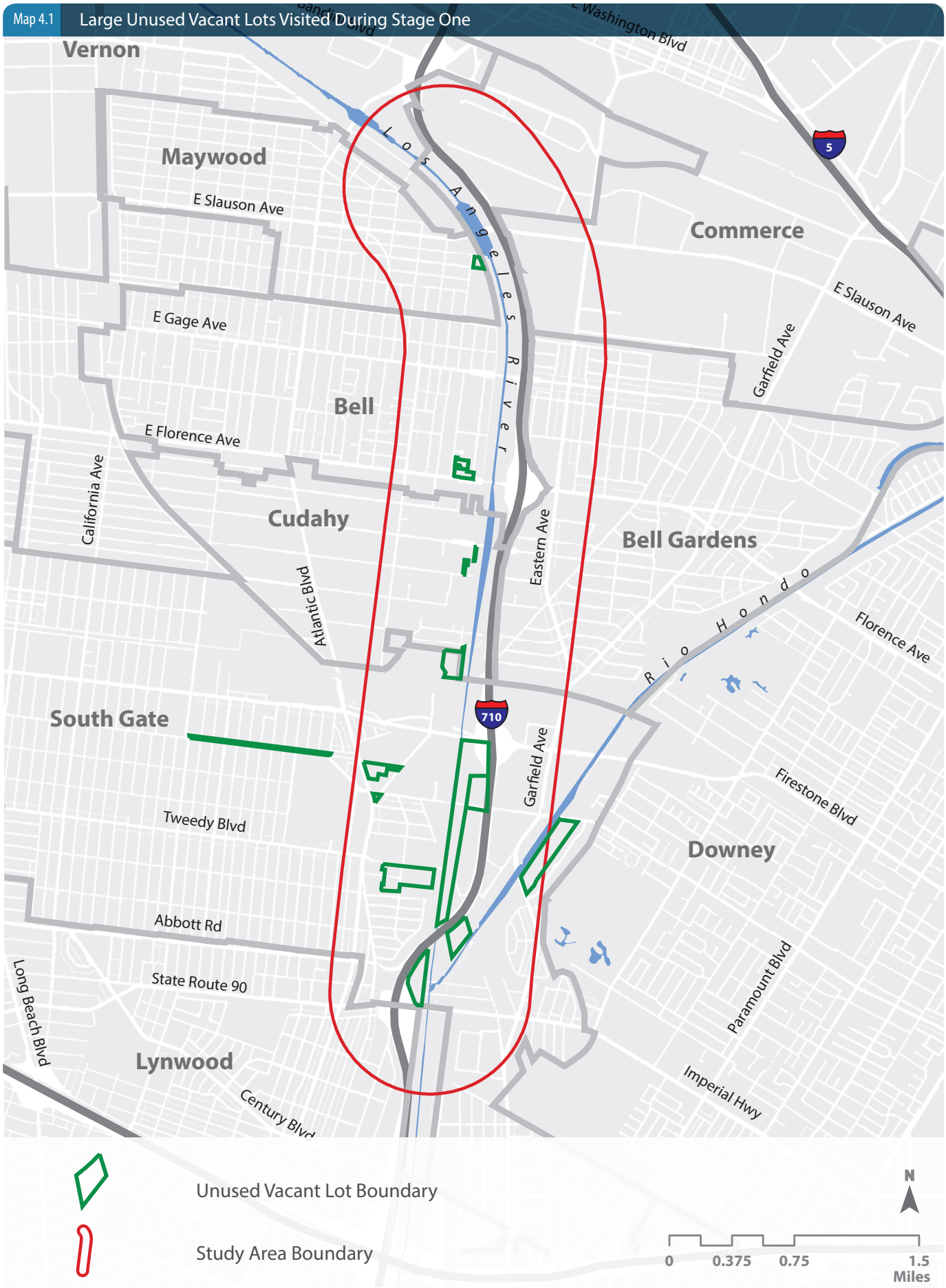
Power line easement along the Los Angeles River near Thunderbird Villa in South Gate.

Unused open space along railway tracks near South Gate.

Unused informal trail along the Los Angeles River in South Gate.

Unused open space near Legacy High School sports field in South Gate.

Map 4.1 Large Unused Vacant Lots Visited During Stage One



STAGE 2

Investigation of Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land

Realizing the limited value of examining large unused vacant lots, the 606 Studio shifted their focus to seeking out unused open available land with better neighborhood connections. The team judged that these spaces would have a greater potential to directly impact residents' daily lives and thereby greater potential to attract resident involvement. While some of the locations considered in Stage 1 were also included in Stage 2, many were excluded because they were not part of a neighborhood.

The 606 Studio also looked for spaces for small scale design-build projects that were embedded in the residents' daily lives. Such spaces might include elements such as sidewalks, medians, dead-ends, and underutilized parking lots.

Unused empty lots near River Drive in Cudahy.

Poorly maintained sidewalk on Live Oak Street in Cudahy.

Unused empty lot at Pritchard Field in Bell.

Poorly maintained railway right-of-way in Bell.

Map 4.2 Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land Visited During Stage Two

STAGE 3

Investigation of Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land and Specific Neighborhood Characteristics

Once the team had completed the physical investigation of the neighborhoods, a large group discussion was conducted to evaluate the available neighborhoods according to the following criteria.

Sense of Community

Some neighborhoods demonstrated pride of place and readiness to participate. Such neighborhoods were considered as having a positive 'sense of community' housing units faced the streets and had a direct visual relationship with the street, use of outdoor decor, and maintained and furnished front yards.

Frequency of Front Yard Use for Social or Recreational Activities or Leisure Pursuits

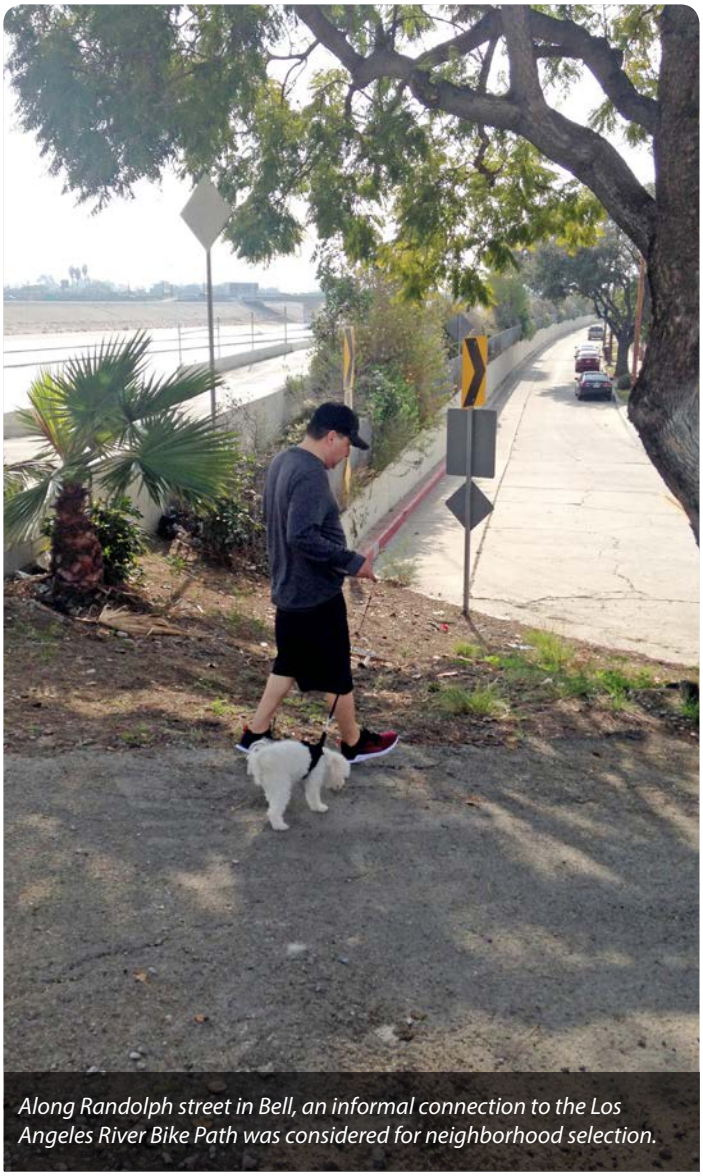
Frequent front yard use for outdoor activities such as games, barbecues, and conversations, high maintenance levels, outdoor furniture, and personal decorations were all taken as signs of community pride and local character.

Presence of Neighborhood Anchors

Neighborhoods with community facilities such as churches, community buildings, and learning centers were prioritized because of the role these facilities play in local committee building and community organizing.

Level of Street and Sidewalk Activity

Neighborhoods which are active and lively have members who walk to work, walk their dogs, or use bicycles to move through the community.



Along Randolph street in Bell, an informal connection to the Los Angeles River Bike Path was considered for neighborhood selection.

Views of the river bike path serve as visual reminders of the river in lieu of actual river views, which are blocked by a levee wall in neighborhoods throughout the study region.

Welcoming and Friendly Nature of the Neighborhood

Neighborhoods with sidewalk and street activity, "cues to care" (Nassauer, 1995), and residents who interacted with the students were considered welcoming and friendly.

Sense of Connection to the Los Angeles River

Neighborhoods with physical or visual access to the Los Angeles River were prioritized.

The neighborhoods with unused available open land were mapped using Google Maps. Information about the group's visit to the potential neighborhoods was documented using photographs and site notes for future studio use. The team then drove and walked the potential neighborhoods that partially or fully met the criteria and documented the results. In the next stage, the 606 Studio created a list of 12 initial neighborhoods that met the majority of the criteria (see Map 4.3).

Fenced homes facing the street are the norm in much of Bell.

Ornate outdoor decor is common in Thunderbird Villa.

Furnished front yards are common leisure and recreational sites in Bell.

Cudahy has high rates of pedestrian activity.

STAGE 4

Identification & Evaluation of 12 Potential Neighborhoods

The 606 Studio visited neighborhoods with the characteristics mentioned in Stage 3 and shortlisted 12 potential neighborhoods through debate and discussion of their relative strengths and weaknesses. Selection was also influenced by a desire to distribute the projects in different areas along the river to maximize the number of communities impacted by the studio's work (see Map 4.3)

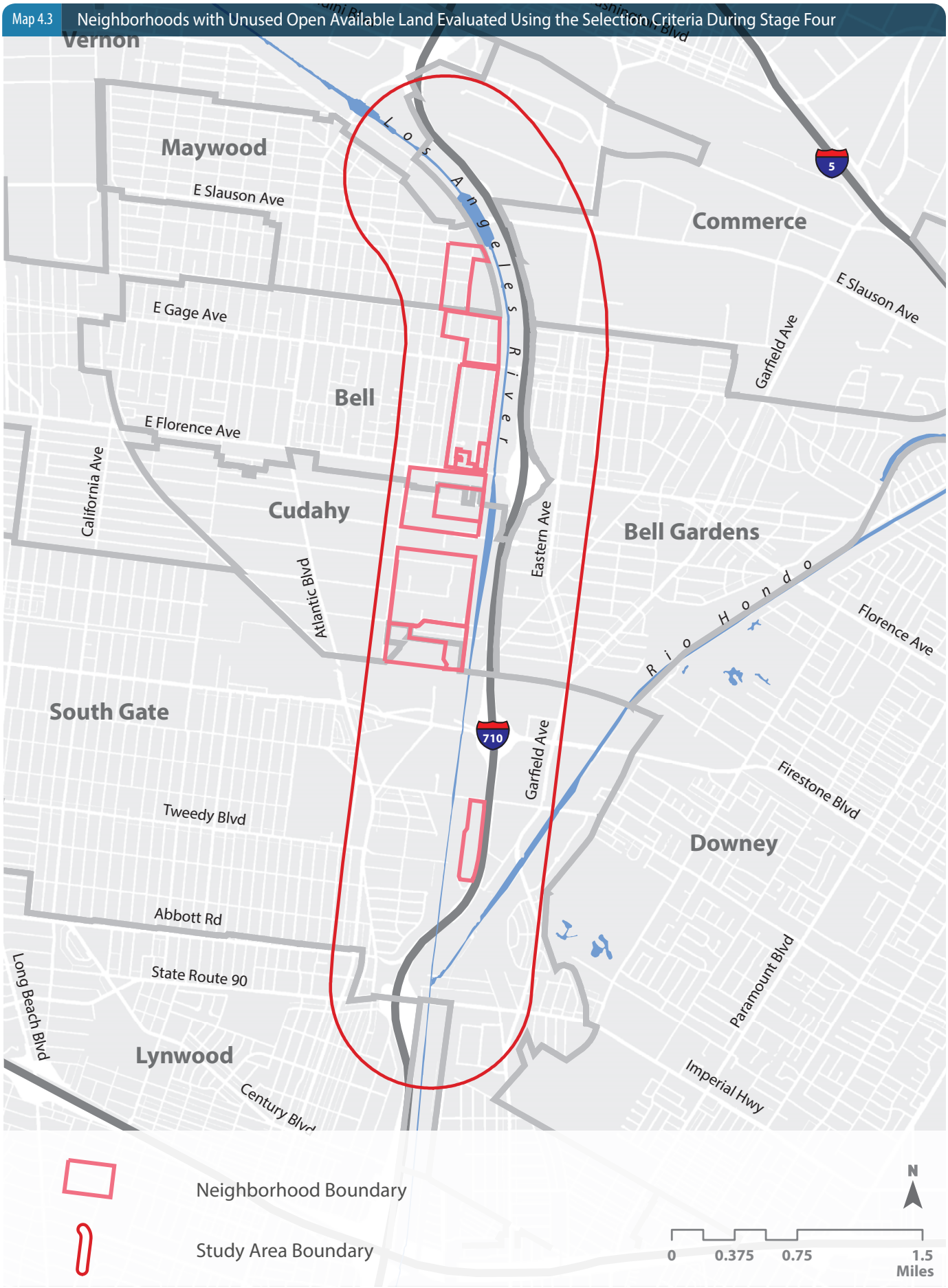
From the list of 12 potential neighborhoods developed by the 606 Studio, each project team chose four to study in additional detail by analyzing the extend to which they met the established criteria (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Neighborhood Selection Criteria (by 606 Studio)

	Sense of Community	Frequency of Front Yard Use	Presence of Neighborhood Anchors	Level of Street Activity	Welcoming and Friendly Nature of the Neighborhood	Sense of Connection to the Los Angeles River
Randolph Street	●	●	●	●	●	●
Florence Avenue mobile home park	●	◑	●	○	○	●
Armstrong Industry open space	○	○	○	○	○	●
Prichard Field	●	●	●	●	○	●
South Live Oak Street and Wilcox Avenue	●	◑	●	○	○	●
Elizabeth Street and Santa Ana Street	●	◑	●	●	●	●
River Drive Apt and Mobile Homes	●	◑	○	◑	○	●
Florence Avenue and Walker Avenue	●	●	●	◑	●	○
Thunderbird Villa	●	◑	○	●	●	●
Cecilia Street and River Drive	○	◑	●	○	●	●
Maywood Riverfront Park	●	◑	●	◑	●	●
Florence Avenue to Gage Avenue	●	◑	●	○	○	●

● Present
◑ Somewhat Present
○ Not Present

Map 4.3 Neighborhoods with Unused Open Available Land Evaluated Using the Selection Criteria During Stage Four



STAGE 5

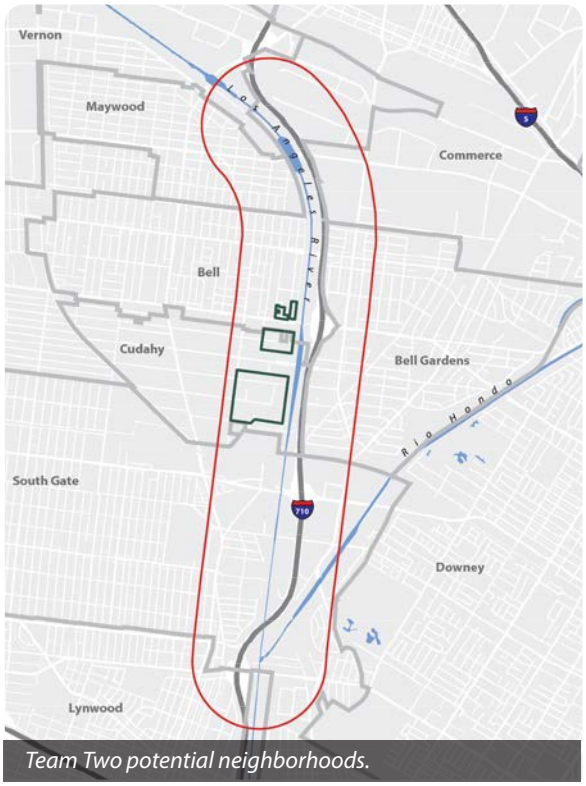
Development of Final Selection Criteria and Selection of Final Neighborhood

At this stage, the 606 Studio is split into three project teams and shortlisted four potential neighborhoods per project team. The project teams used their experiences from the field visits along with some primary research and mapping to evaluate the potential neighborhoods. Based on the specific character of potential neighborhoods, each project team used the criteria discussed earlier as well as additional selection criteria identified through individual group discussions (see Table 4.2).

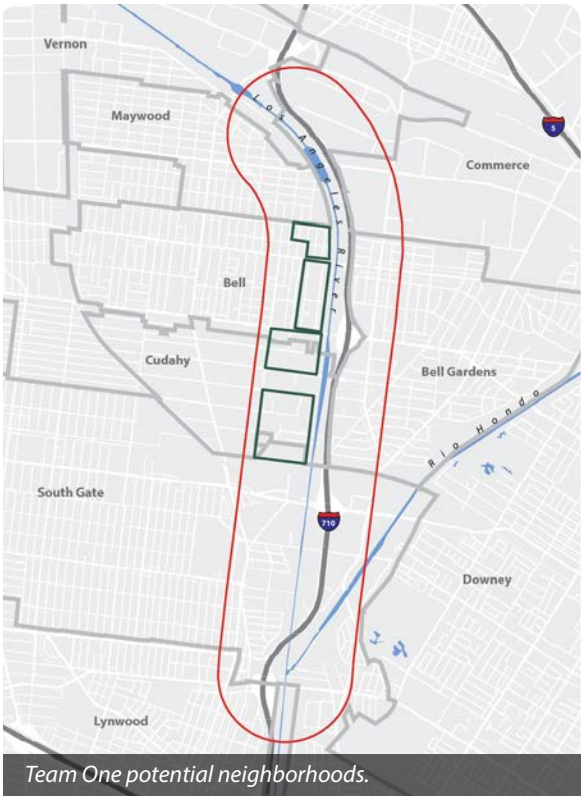
Each project team prioritized the selection criteria slightly differently, based on their observations during the field visits.

Team One focused on views and access to the Los Angeles River while choosing their final neighborhood. The northeastern part of the City of Bell was specifically appealing due to its frequently used physical connection to the Los Angeles River, the railroad right-of-way and potential future projects planned along the Randolph Street.

While direct physical and visual connection to the Los Angeles River was the prioritized selection criteria for Team One, additionally the team focused on criteria such as park proximity (specifically seeking out neighborhoods outside



Team Two potential neighborhoods.



Team One potential neighborhoods.

Team Three potential neighborhoods.

a ¼ mile walking distance to a park), a high frequency of front yard use, a welcoming and friendly neighborhood, and availability of unused open land (see Table 4.2).

As one of the goals of the project is to foster connections to the Los Angeles River, Team Two decided that both their neighborhood's access to the river (via a multi-use ramp) and visibility to the river path (serving as a proxy for visibility of the actual river, which is blocked by a concrete berm throughout the study area) would aid in connecting residents to the river. Likewise, the team decided that the high proportion of young residents and local park poverty indicated a need for this type of project.

Although the Elizabeth Street and Santa Ana Street neighborhood includes Cudahy Park, this six acre sports facility is inadequate for the neighborhood's roughly 4600 residents due to a lack of other recreational opportunities in an area with one of California's highest population densities (Quinones S. 2007). The neighborhood has approximately 1.4 acres of park per thousand residents, far below the 10 acres/1000 residents national benchmark and less than half the State of California's three acres/1000 residents park poverty standard (U.S. Census 2010; The City Project 2009). The team also looked for a strong sense of community, as evidenced by conversation among neighbors, high pedestrian activity, and a high frequency of street, alley, and sidewalk play by children (see Table 4.2).

Team Three examined communities that suffered from a lack of local amenities and park poverty. Many of the most isolated and under served communities in the area exist as islands of residential space surrounded by industrial land use. The team decided that a strong sense of community, a diverse viewshed, and available vacant land would be conducive to a strong community design project. As a mobile home park in an otherwise industrial landscape, Thunderbird Villa's strong sense of community comes in part from its extreme isolation. The views of the Los Angeles River, prevalence of vacant post-industrial land and utility corridors were seen as having design possibilities (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Neighborhood Selection Criteria (by project team)

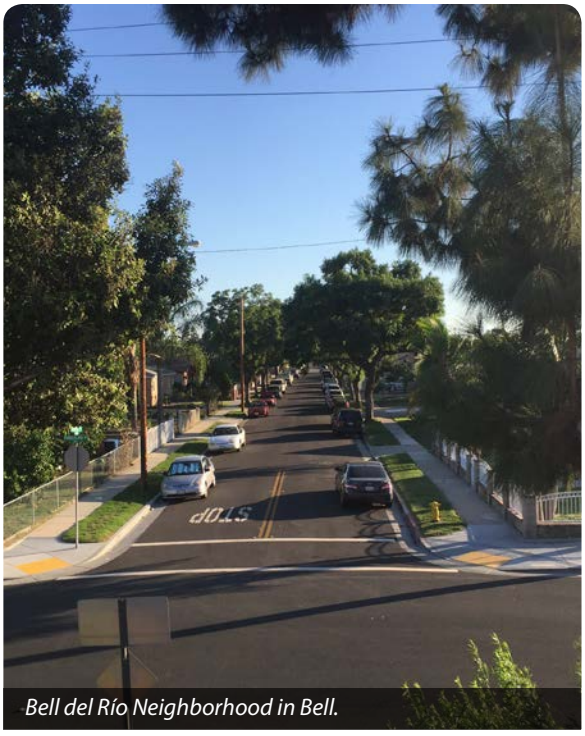
Team One
Views and access to the Los Angeles River
Friendly neighborhood
High frequency of front yard use
Availability of underutilized open land
Team Two
Access to the Los Angeles River
Sense of community
Visibility to the River Path
Team Three
Segregated community with limited access
Location in industrial zone
Sense of community
Visual diversity
Available vacant land

Final selection

The project teams finally selected neighborhoods in Belll (Team One), Cudahy (Team Two) and South Gate (Team Three). These neighborhoods were named by the residents during the later project phase as Belll del Río, La Santana and Thunderbird Villa (see Map 4.4). The final neighborhoods were chosen through a discursive process within each project team, and then confirmed through a 606 Studio discussion to ensure that the neighborhoods represented a range of conditions to maximize the ability to develop and assess a range of participatory tools to aid future students and professionals.

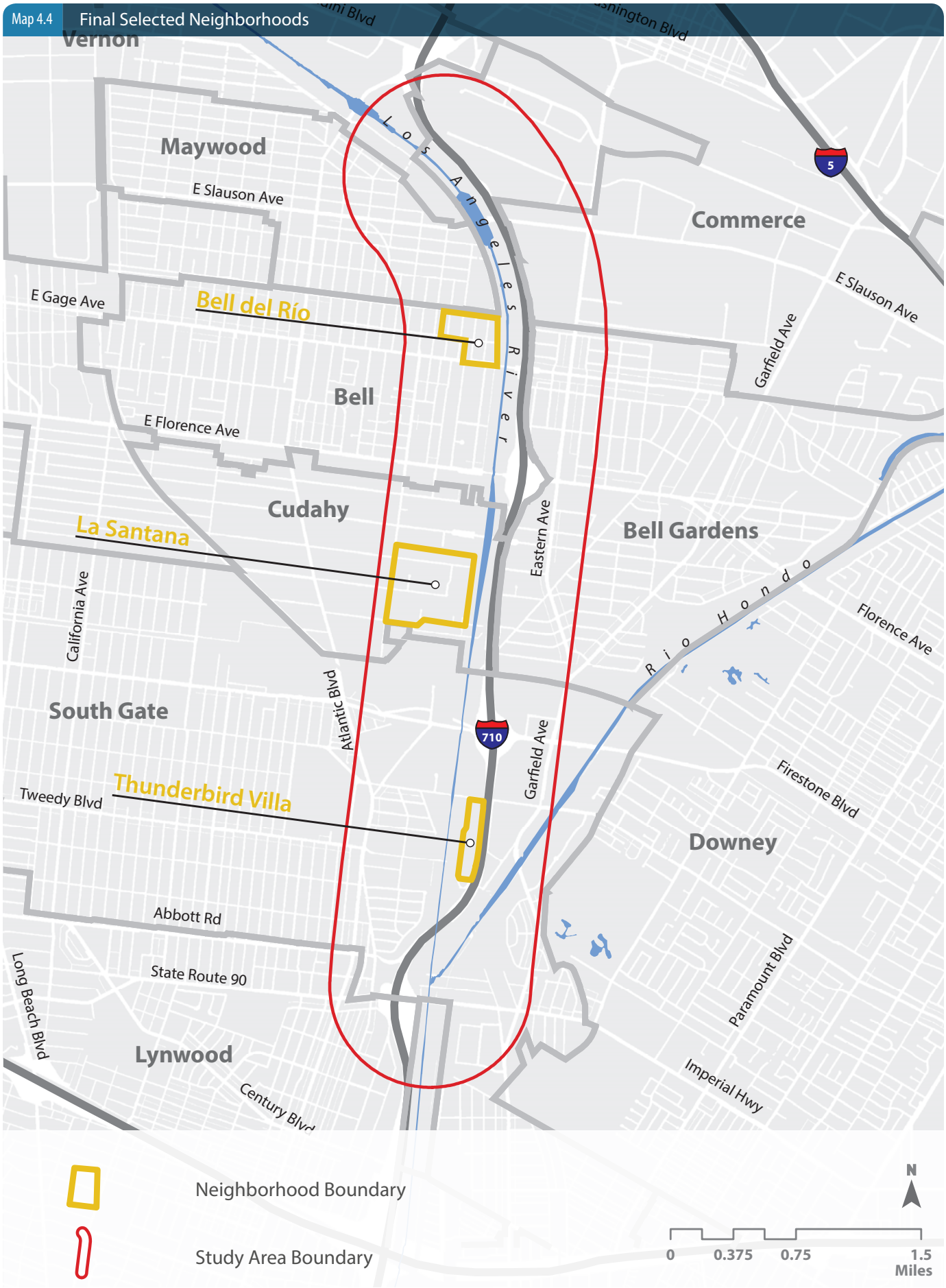
The process of neighborhood selection followed by the 606 Studio was a qualitative process and thus has its limitations—among them the time consuming nature of this type of process and a lack of quantitative comparison between choices. The advantage of this approach, however, is that students were able to observe local conditions, get a sense of the neighborhood culture, and become familiar with the communities.

La Santana Neighborhood in Cudahy.



Bell del Río Neighborhood in Bell.

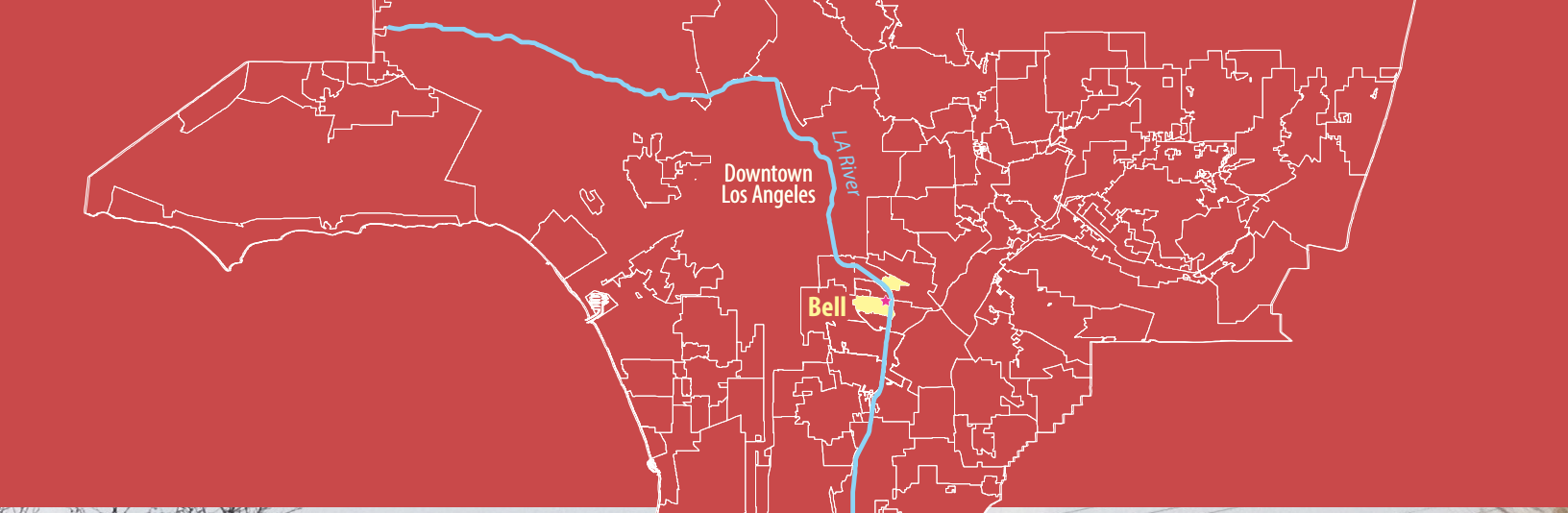
Thunderbird Villa in South Gate.


Map 4.4 Final Selected Neighborhoods
Vernon
Maywood
E Slauson Ave
Commerce
E Gage Ave
Bell del Río
Bell
E Florence Ave
Cudahy
La Santana
Bell Gardens
California Ave
Eastern Ave
Los Angeles River
Rio Hondo
Florence Ave
South Gate
Atlantic Blvd
Garfield Ave
Tweedy Blvd
Thunderbird Villa
Firestone Blvd
Downey
Abbott Rd
State Route 90
Long Beach Blvd
Paramount Blvd
Lynwood
Century Blvd
Imperial Hwy
5
710
Neighborhood Boundary
Study Area Boundary
N
0
0.375
0.75
1.5
Miles

BELL DEL RÍO NEIGHBORHOOD

CITY OF BELL, CALIFORNIA

The project team and community members walk the neighborhood to identify potential site locations.

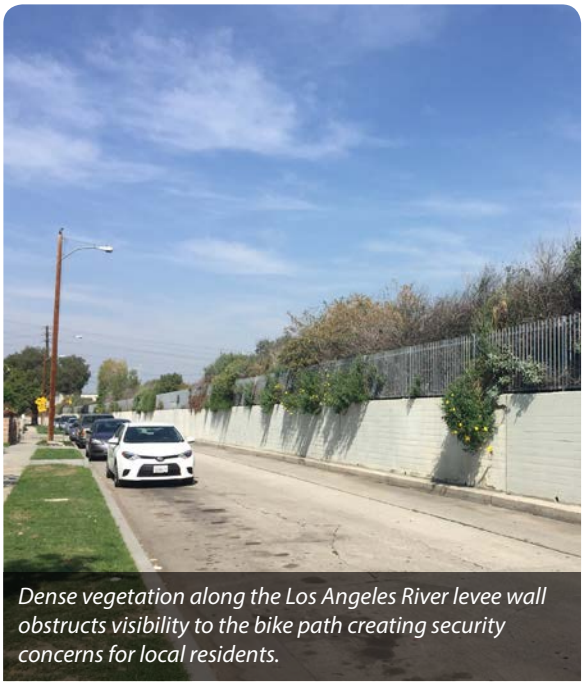

Downtown
Los Angeles
LA River
Bell

WHERE IS BELL DEL RÍO?

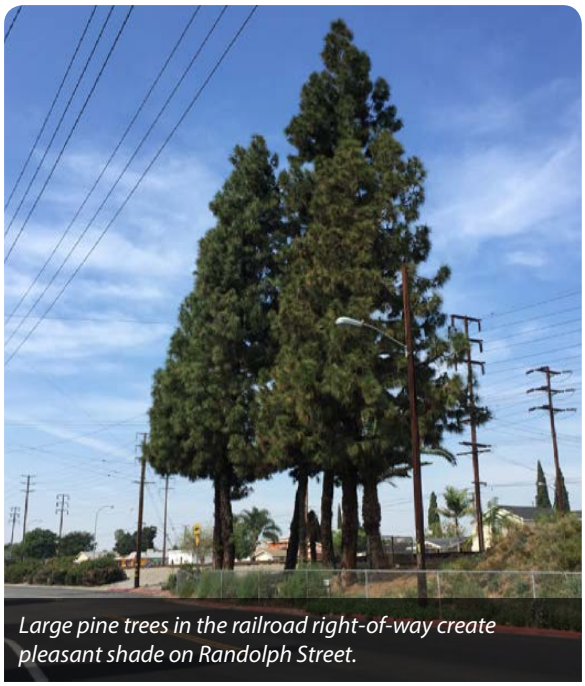
5.1

The Bell del Río neighborhood is located in the City of Bell, a 2.8 square mile city in Los Angeles County 10 miles south of downtown Los Angeles. The city is bordered by the Los Angeles River to the east, Maywood to the north, Huntington Park to the west, and Cudahy to the south. Land use patterns divide the city into two distinct parts: the residential and commercial core in the south of the city and west of the river, and the heavily industrialized zone in the north of the city, east of the river.

The boundaries of the Bell del Río neighborhood are Pala Avenue to the west, Randolph Street to the north and Filmore Street and Gage Avenue to the south. The Los Angeles River sits behind a seven foot high levee wall adjacent to River Drive, defining the neighborhood's eastern boundary (see Map 5.1).



Dense vegetation along the Los Angeles River levee wall obstructs visibility to the bike path creating security concerns for local residents.

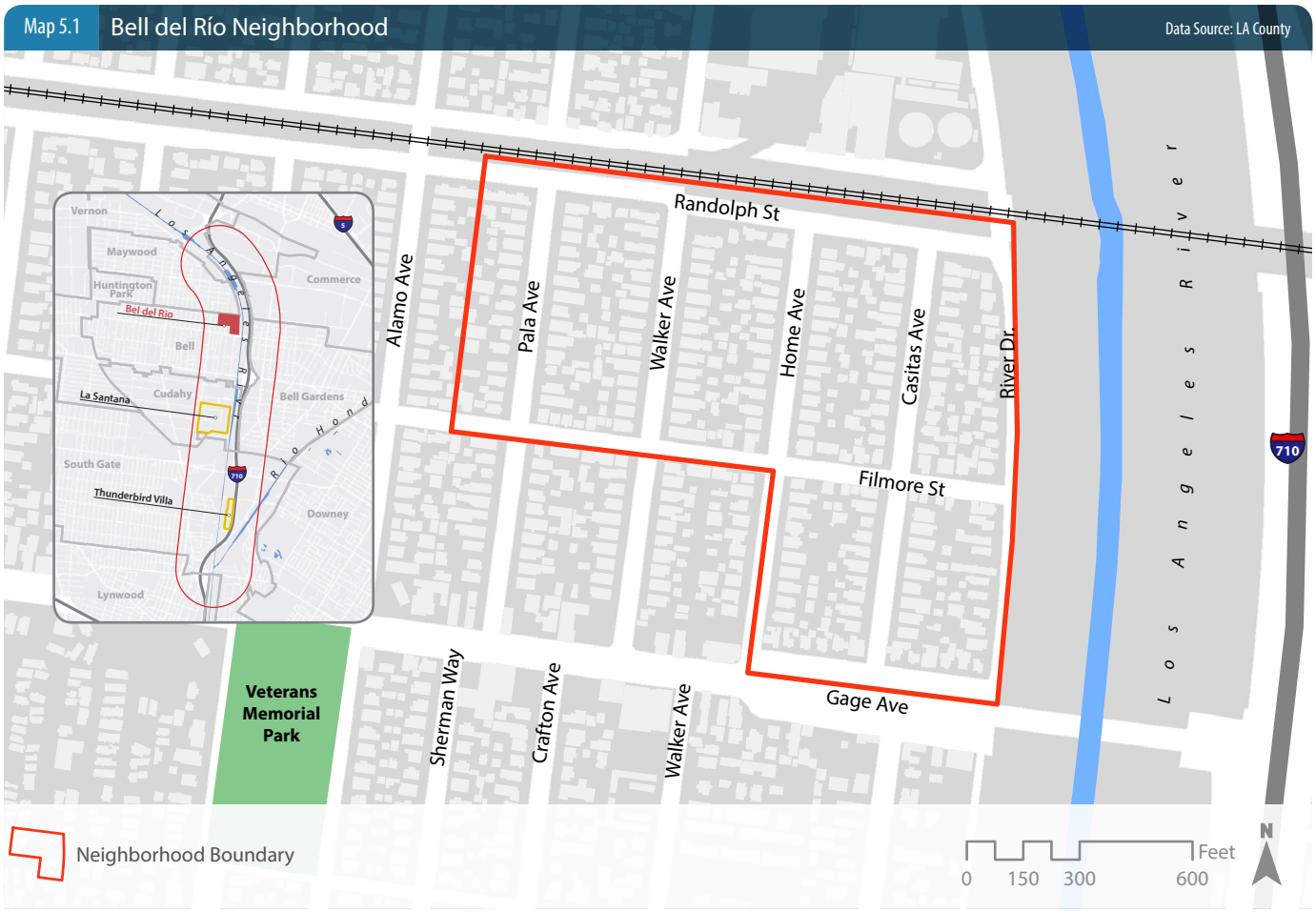


Large pine trees in the railroad right-of-way create pleasant shade on Randolph Street.

The graffiti-covered railway bridge on Randolph Street is a popular social space for local teenagers.

Map 5.1 Bell del Río Neighborhood

Data Source: LA County



Freight trains pass erratically during the day and night, creating unwelcome noise in the surrounding community.

APPLICATION OF METHODS

5.2

Introduction

At the project's inception, the project team identified information they needed to gain an understanding of the community. The questions were:

- Who lives here?
- What improvements do residents want to make in this neighborhood?
- What are the residents' immediate needs related to quality of life in this neighborhood?
- What are the best locations for this project?
- How can the project team engage the community in making design decisions?
- What are the past, current and future projects in the area?

With these questions in mind, the project team chose the following methods: GIS, data mining, field observations, interviews, canvassing, steering committee meetings, community meetings, site selection walks, design workshops and work days.

The project team used each method during various phases of the project (see Table 5.1).

GIS

The project team used GIS to understand the neighborhood's social and environmental setting (see Section 1.4 for more details). Common vegetation types were ground truthed using hand held GPS devices, and then digitized into desktop GIS. Favorite and unsafe locations were mapped by community members using a hard copy aerial photograph, and these results were digitized in desktop GIS and analyzed using a kernel density approach. Recreation access was mapped in desktop GIS by creating quarter mile buffer from neighborhood parks to analyze which homes were not within walking distance of a park.

Data Mining

The project team used data mining to understand the study region in detail and to identify relevant social, economic and political information (see Section 1.4 for more details).

Community mapping activities reflect local priorities. Community members map favorite and unsafe locations, writing notes as well as drawing their walking routes.

Field Observations

The project team used field observations to document the spatial distribution of vegetation in the community. After identifying common trees, the team walked the neighborhood on November 14, 2015, to document the locations of these trees using a hand-held GPS device. The results were mapped in order to analyze vegetation distribution patterns through the neighborhood (see Section 1.4 for more details).

Interviews

The project team interviewed city administration and local organizations during October 2015 to get more information about the neighborhood and the study region. Interviews were conducted in person by either the entire project team or an individual member. Interviews took place at the interviewee's office using a semi-structured format with handwritten notes. The interviews ranged in length from 15 minutes to 3.5 hours and were intended to inform local government staff and officials about the project, collect information on active community groups

Table 5.1 Application of Methods

Method	Phase	Who Was Involved?	Techniques
GIS	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Project Team	N/A
Data Mining	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Project Team	N/A
Field Observations	• Organization Building • Site Selection • Program • Design	• Project Team • Bilingual Translators	N/A
Interviews	• Organization Building	• Project Team • Outside Organizations	• Open Discussions • Semi-Structured Interviews
Canvassing	• Organization Building	• Project Team • Community • Bilingual Translators	• Informal Conversations
Steering Committee Meetings	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Steering Committee • Project Team	• Open Discussions • Brainstorming • Mapping Exercises • Neighborhood Walks
Community Meetings	• Site Selection • Program	• Community • Bilingual Translators • Project Team	• Open Discussions • Brainstorming
Site Selection Walks	• Site Selection • Program	• Steering Committee • Community • Bilingual Translators • Project Team	• Open Discussions • Comparative Exercises • Ranking Exercises
Design Workshops	• Design	• Steering Committee • Community • Bilingual Translators • Project Team	• Open Discussions • Mapping Exercises • Group Discussions • Site Design
Work Days	• Construction	• Steering Committee • Community • Bilingual Translators • Project Team	• On Site Painting

Table 5.2 Project Methods Logic

Big Question	Sub Questions	Methods	Results	Implications
Who lives here?	How does this neighborhood compare to the broader region? What are its demographics, income and level of education? What is the social and political outlook of this community?	• GIS • Data Mining • Interviews • Canvassing	• Diverse age distribution including many seniors • Majority working class • Latino • Politically complex community with distrust of the government	• Design for seniors • Cultural considerations for design details (color, plant palette, etc.) • Consider political complexity in dealing with city administration
What improvements do residents want to make?	What are the opportunities and constraints facing this neighborhood? How do the opportunities compare with what can be done here?	• Canvassing • Field Observations • Interviews • Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings • Site Selection Walks • Design Workshops	• Improvements that calm the traffic and make streets safe for pedestrians • Improvements that can reinforce neighborhood pride and alleviate vandalism • Improvements that promote active use of Randolph Street • Improvements that make the frequently used informal river access a positive and widely accepted space	• Need for traffic calming devices • Improve walkability on Randolph Street • Improve the informal river access
What are residents' immediate needs related to improving the quality of life in this neighborhood?	What are the issues faced by neighbors on a daily basis?	• Canvassing • Field Observations • Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings • Site Selection Walks	• Speeding and reckless driving on Walker Avenue and Randolph Street • Vandalism and poor maintenance along Randolph Avenue and at the river access • Trash dumping along the railway right-of-way and near the river access • Perceived unsafe conditions along the railway right-of-way and near the river	• Need for traffic calming devices at the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue • Activate and improve walkability on Randolph Street • Activate and improve river access • Low maintenance • Graffiti-proof / resistant to vandalism
What are the best locations for this project?	What are the pros and cons of each potential site? What is the community's preferred location for the project?	• Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings • Site Selection Walks	• Potential sites identified by the community	• Need for traffic calming devices for the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue • Activate and improve walkability on Randolph Street • Activate and improve river access

Big Question	Sub Questions	Methods	Results	Implications
How can the project team engage the community in making design decisions?	How would the community like to see the potential sites improved? What are the similarities and differences between the three community-generated concepts? What are the design details that the community would like to incorporate in the project?	• Design Workshops • Site Selection Walks	• Three conceptual designs for each of the three potential sites • One finalized conceptual design for each of the three potential sites • Community-preferred design details	• Activities and tools to engage the community in making design decisions • Cultural considerations for design details (color, plant palette, etc.) • Consideration of political complexity in dealing with publicly held land, such as the challenges of the approval process
What are the past, current and future projects in this area ?	How do they help the project team understand the study area? How do those projects relate to the work the project team is doing?	• Data Mining • Interviews	• Pritchard Field Project • "Rail to River" Project • San Luis Obispo Proposal • Huntington Park Bicycle Master Plan	• City's struggle to get resources for new park projects • City's funding difficulties after the corruption scandal • Potential of Randolph Street to become a major focus for future projects in Bell and neighboring cities

The project team provides a brief explanation of design principles prior to the participatory design activity.

and residents, and identify past, current and future projects in the area.

The team interviewed the following people:

- Assistant City Planner Carlos Chacon (City of Bell)
- Councilman Nestor Valencia (City of Bell)
- Recreation Supervisor Connie Hurtado (City of Bell)
- Recreation Coordinator Melissa Gomez (City of Bell)

In addition, the team met with a representative of the Bell Residents' Club (BRC) at a local coffee shop. The meeting format followed the process identified above.

Specific questions included:

- What current and future recreation and open space projects exist in the Bell area?
- What is the administrative structure of the city? Who can answer the team's questions about working with the city?
- What community or stakeholder groups or organizations are active in the area?
- What types of activities are being carried out by local community groups?
- Who are the community leaders that could participate on the steering committee?

Canvassing

The project team used canvassing to interact with residents, introduce the project, and recruit residents to serve on the steering committee.

From early November through December of 2015, the project team canvassed the Bell del Río neighborhood on eight days during daylight hours. The neighborhood was divided into five streets which were covered during the eight canvassing sessions (see Map 5.7 on page 115). Groups of three students and a Spanish language translator went door-to-door in the project neighborhood.

After knocking on neighbors' doors, introducing themselves, briefly introducing the project, and explaining an informational flyer, project team members inquired about residents' concerns for the neighborhood and their interest in participating on the project steering committee. The outreach materials the project team prepared included bilingual (Spanish and English) flyers and personalized business cards (see Appendix B.14).

Specific questions asked during canvassing sessions included:

- How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

Steering committee members discuss potential sites for the upcoming community meeting.

- What do you think can be improved in this neighborhood?
- How often do you use the river path? What do you think of it?
- What are your feelings about the area near the railroad tracks?

The information, comments, and concerns provided by the residents were documented with handwritten notes by the project team (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meetings

The project team held steering committee meetings throughout the project process to answer a variety of questions. In general, the project team employed steering committee meetings to prepare for community meetings and to prepare steering committee members to play a leadership role in organizing future project meetings. Techniques such as open discussions, brainstorming, mapping exercises and site selection walks were employed during steering committee meetings.

Steering Committee Meeting One

Held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, the first steering committee meeting took place at the Parents' Center at Woodlawn Avenue Elementary School. The goal of this meeting was to acquaint committee members with the project team, and to test the process and questions for the first community meeting. Although not within the project neighborhood, the Woodlawn Avenue Elementary School was selected due to its walkable distance from the neighborhood.

The team members introduced themselves and the project, including the scope of work and timeline. The intent of this meeting was to answer the following questions:

- How can we improve the neighborhood?
- Where are the most suitable locations for the project?
- What are the issues and challenges facing the neighborhood?
- What are the best times and places to have steering committee meetings?

During the meeting, the team facilitated a mapping exercise using an enlarged aerial image of the project neighborhood. Attendees located their homes and neighborhood boundaries. The team and local participants then discussed issues and challenges faced by the community, and brainstormed improvements that could be made to the neighborhood (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meeting Two

Held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 16, 2015, the second steering committee meeting was intended to prepare for the upcoming community meeting. The goal of this meeting was to perform a trial site selection walk with the steering committee to obtain their feedback on the exercise. This steering committee meeting was intended to answer the following questions:

- What is the most effective route for the site selection walk?

Steering committee members take an active role in outreach, introducing the project to neighbors and announcing upcoming meetings.

- What tools and techniques should be used for the meeting's mapping exercise?
- How can the steering committee assist in reaching out to the broader community?

The team met with the committee at the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue and walked the neighborhood to identify the best route for the upcoming site selection walk. During the walk, the steering committee and the project team distributed bilingual flyers advertising the community meeting. The team also facilitated a mapping exercise in which committee members placed stickers on potential project locations (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Community Meetings

The project team held community meetings throughout the project to collect and share information, answer inventory questions, and make design decisions. Community meetings were intended to engage the broader community from the project neighborhood. These meetings took place throughout the project, each aimed at addressing a distinct phase in the design process.

Community Meeting One

The first community meeting was held at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2016, at the railway right-of-way near the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue. The goal of this meeting was to identify multiple potential locations for the project. Flyers advertising the meeting were distributed during the steering committee meeting on January 16, 2016. Responding to the flyers distributed by the committee members, 15 residents attended this meeting. The meeting was intended to answer the following questions:

- How can residents and the project team improve this neighborhood?
- What are possible locations for improvements?

The wealth of potential project locations became apparent during a community site walk, surprising many of the residents present.

- What are the opportunities and concerns of this community?

The project team conducted brainstorming, mapping exercises and a site selection walk during this community meeting. During the mapping exercises, participants located their homes on an enlarged aerial map and identified potential locations for the project (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Community Meeting Two

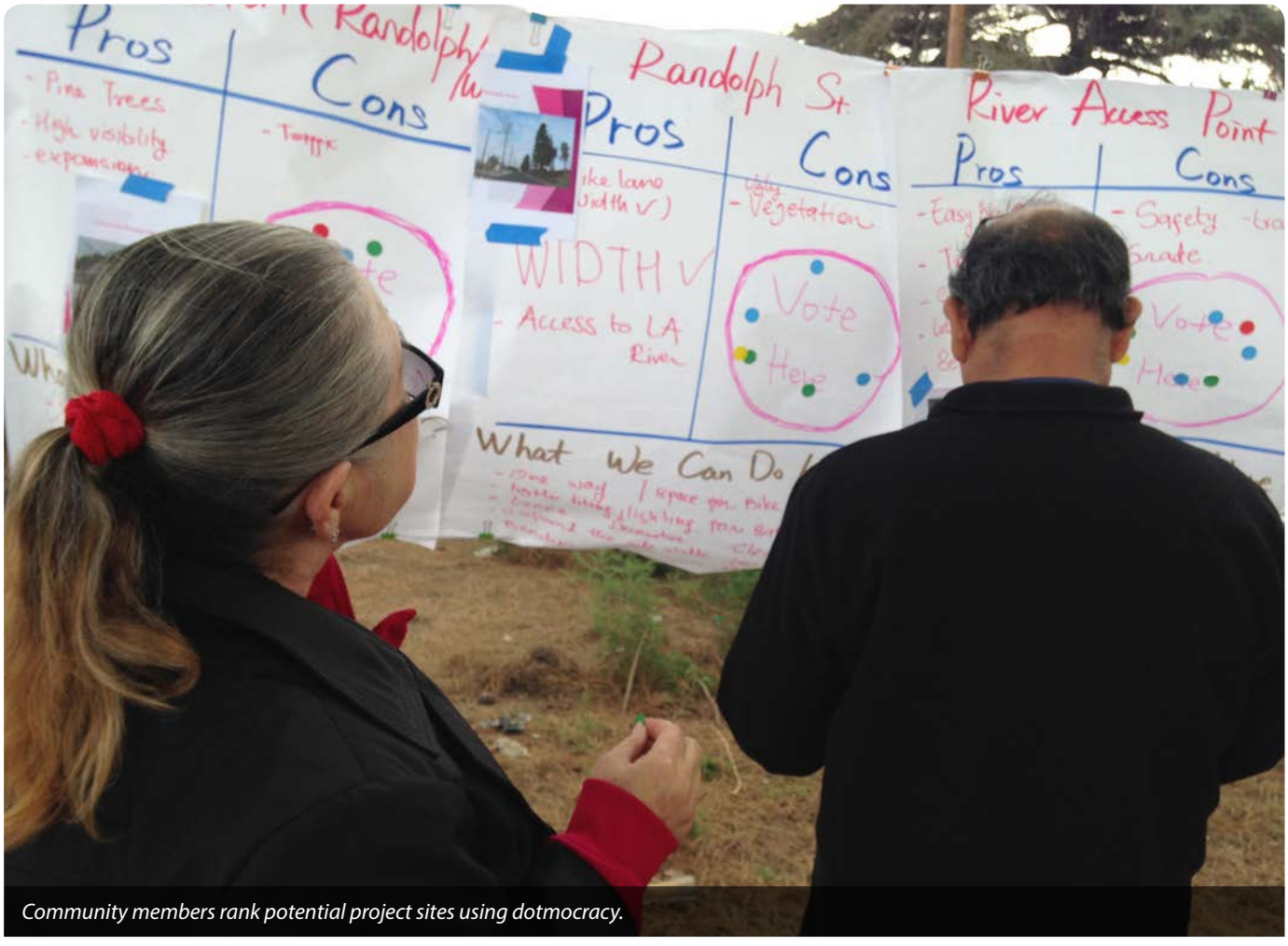
Held on January 30, 2016, at the railway right-of-way near the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue (the same location as the first community meeting), the second community meeting was aimed at prioritizing sites. Seventeen participants attended the meeting. The team used techniques such as brainstorming, open discussion and dotmocracy. The meeting was intended to answer the following questions:

- What are the pros and cons of the sites identified?
- What kinds of improvements can be implemented at each site?
- What are the top three prioritized sites for the community?

Following an open discussion and brainstorming, the project team facilitated the voting process, with residents voting for the sites they considered most appropriate for the project. Three potential sites were identified in case the community's top selection was not available (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Site Selection Walks

The project team conducted site selection walks in order to identify potential locations for the project. The team facilitated two site selection walks: one with the steering committee, and one with the community (see Committee Meeting Two and Community Meeting One in this section for more details). These walks included open discussions and mapping exercises.



Community members rank potential project sites using dotmocracy.

Site Selection Walk One

A site selection walk was conducted with steering committee members during the steering committee meeting on January 16, 2016 (see Committee Meeting One). The goal of this meeting was to perform a trial site selection walk with the steering committee to obtain their feedback prior to the upcoming community meeting. The meeting used tools such as ledger size aerial photos and open discussion to get feedback from the steering committee members.

The project team met with the steering committee at the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue and walked the neighborhood to identify the destinations and route for the upcoming site selection walk with the community. During the walk, the steering committee members placed stickers on hard copy aerial maps to mark potential locations and gave comments on how to improve the route. During this meeting, the steering committee helped the team distribute bilingual flyers advertising the community meeting (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Site Selection Walk Two

During the community meeting on January 23, 2016, a site selection walk was conducted with the broader community. The project team used board mounted ledger size aerial photos with stickers and pens for taking notes and open discussions to get feedback.

As participants walked the neighborhood, they were encouraged to identify potential project sites by putting stickers on the map, drawing, making notes, and talking with the project team. Following the site selection walk, participants were informed of the next project meeting to be held in the same location in one week (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Design Workshops

The project team and the community used workshops to design the three potential project sites. Design workshops were used multiple times throughout the process to address various design phases such as conceptualization and design development. They were intended to engage the community in the design process.

Community members share ideas for the sites during Design Workshop Two.

Design Workshop One

On February 10, 2016, the first design workshop was held at the power line easement at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive. Sixteen neighbors attended this workshop, which was intended to answer following questions:

- What do we need to know about each of the three sites before beginning conceptual design?
- How can we improve the three potential sites using the programmatic elements discussed during previous meetings?

The goal of this meeting was to create three conceptual designs for each of the three potential sites and generate nine designs in total. The project team facilitated this workshop by dividing participants into three groups of three to four participants per group with each team member assisting one group through the process. Each group used scaled cutouts of various design elements to generate three concepts per site (ssee Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Design Workshop Two

On February 27, 2016, the second design workshop was held at the power line easement at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive. Eleven neighbors attended this workshop, which was intended to answer the following question:

- How can we combine the three conceptual designs for each site and create final concepts?

The goal of this meeting was to review the points on which all participants had agreed, and to discuss points of diversity. The team facilitated a group discussion to consider each design decision and marked the points of agreement on the drawing (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Design Workshop Three

On March 12, 2016, the third design workshop was held at the railway right-of-way near the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue. The goal of this workshop was to collect community input related to design

Community members utilize scaled models and symbolic stickers to develop design alternatives.

details so that the project team could generate detailed construction drawings. Responding to the phone calls made three days prior announcing the meeting, nine neighbors attended this workshop. The workshop was intended to answer the following questions:

- What are the design details that the community would like to incorporate into the project?
- How can we incorporate Bell del Río's unique neighborhood identity into this project?

To identify the community's preferred design details, the team distributed a booklet containing sample design elements in different styles and types. These included photos of various types of ground covers, seating, materials, and other details. For each element, four or more choices were provided, and participants were asked to mark either their favorite choice or top three choices. The team also used a site walk and open discussion to engage participants in a dialog about neighborhood identity (see Section 5.4 for details of the results).

Design Workshop Four

The fourth design workshop occurred on April 23, 2016, at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive. The goal of the workshop was to get community input related to design details for the long term project so that the project team could generate a detailed site plan and show it to potential partner organizations for future development. The project team made multiple rounds of phone calls and sent emails to community members four days before the workshop. Eleven neighbors responded and attended this workshop, which was intended to answer following question:

- What are the design details that the community would like to incorporate into the river access site?

To better understand the community's preferred design details, the project team created a booklet including samples of design elements such as wheelchair access ramps, bollards, terraces, and lighting. At the end of the workshop, participants engaged in site clean up which inspired and motivated residents to continue working to improve their community (see Section 5.6 for details of the results).

The participants gather under the shady pine trees at the railway right-of-way to discuss design details for the parklet.

Work Days

The project team used site construction during workdays to implement the designs developed by the residents and the project team (see Section 5.5 for details of the results).

Work Day One

The first work day took place on Saturday, April May 14, 2016, at the Randolph Street project site from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with eight community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Cleaning and preparing the street for the murals
- Sketching the murals on the ground
- Preparing painting materials for the volunteers
- Painting two street murals on Randolph Street at River Drive and at Casitas Avenue

(see Section 5.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Two

The second work day took place on Saturday, May 21, 2016, at the Randolph Street project site from 8:00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. with 10 community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Cleaning and preparing the street for the murals
- Sketching the murals on the ground
- Preparing painting materials for the volunteers
- Painting two street murals on Randolph Street at Home Avenue and at Walker Avenue
- Touching up and finishing the two previous murals

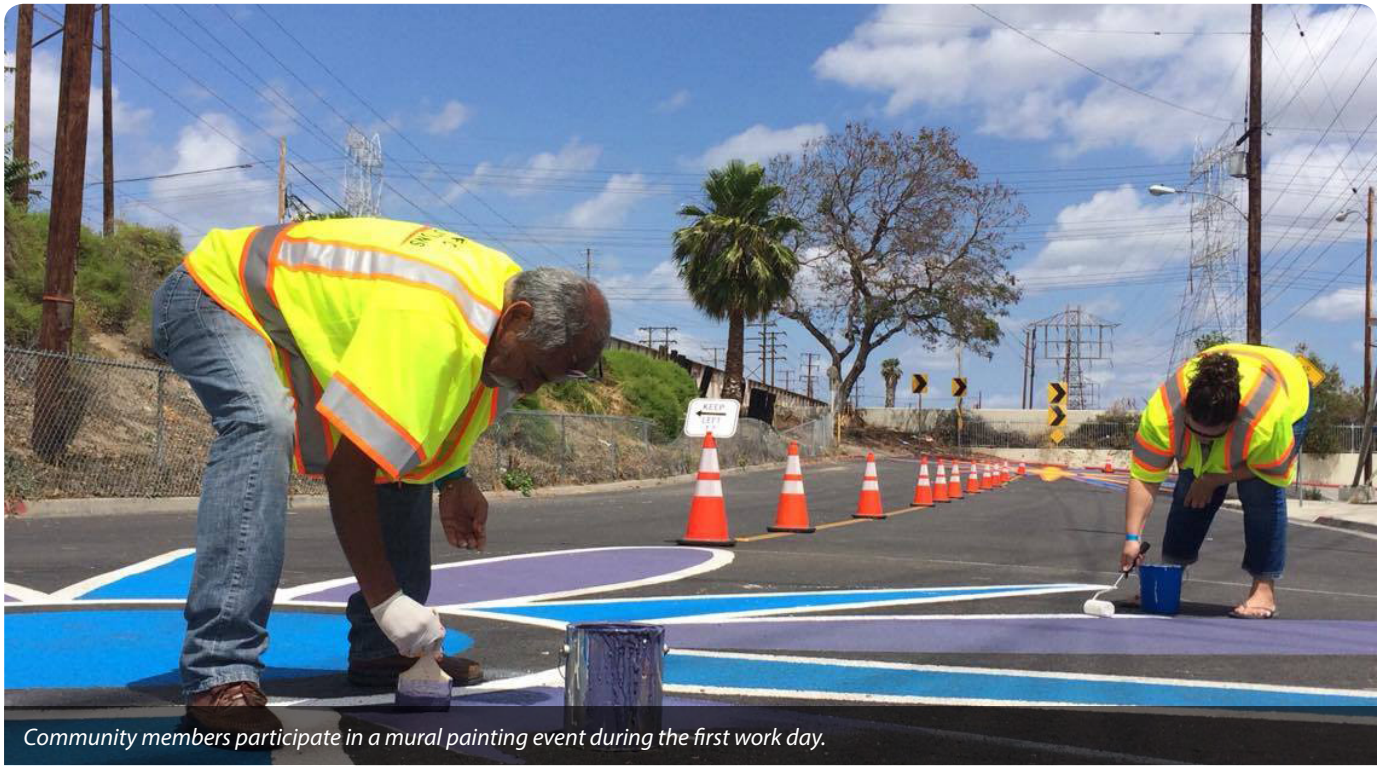
(see Section 5.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Three

The third work day took place on Saturday, June 11, 2016, at the Randolph Street project site from 8:00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. with five community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Cleaning and preparing the street for the remaining painting
- Preparing painting materials for the volunteers
- Touching up and finishing the murals at Home Avenue and at Walker Avenue

(see Section 5.5 for details of the results).



Community members participate in a mural painting event during the first work day.

Neighborhood Demographics

Bell del Río is a predominantly working class Latino community. The neighborhood has an overall population of 7769 people with 96% being Hispanic, and a population density of 12,107 people per square mile, a figure high above the county average of 2419 people per square mile and the City of Los Angeles' density of 8092 people per square mile (2010 U.S. Census). The median household income is $29,744 which is lower than the county median of $55,870, and roughly 65% of residents live below two times the federal poverty level (American Community Survey; OEHHA, 2014). Of the population over 25 years of age, roughly 55.5% have attained less than a high school degree (OEHHA, 2014).

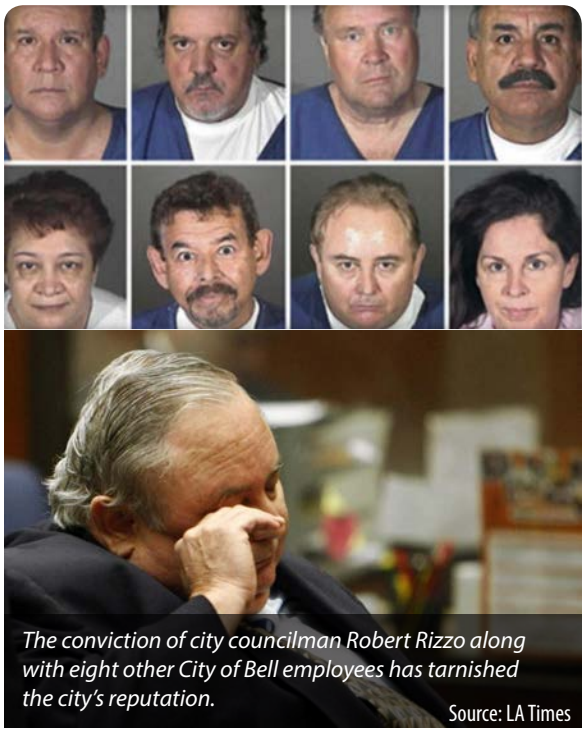
Historic Context

Like much of Los Angeles County, this area was originally inhabited by the Gabrielino Tribe, with Spanish settlers arriving in the mid-16th century. Bell and the surrounding area was given as a gift from the King of Spain to aristocrat and soldier Don Antonio Maria Lugo, who later became Mayor of Los Angeles. Incorporated as a city in 1927, the City of Bell is named after its pioneer founder, James George Bell, who in 1876 bought tracts of the Lugo family's property when the family's fortune diminished (City of Bell, 2005).

The years between 1920 and 1935 saw explosive growth in the population of Bell (City of Bell, 2005). During Bell's early years, the Mexican American community suffered from widespread discrimination and racism in Los Angeles. Some of the most visible conflicts occurred between white police officers and Mexican Americans. The most infamous case was the Zoot Suit Riots that took place in Bell's industrial zone (Novas, 2007).

The City of Bell has been plagued by scandal in the past six years. In July 2010, two Los Angeles Times journalists revealed malfeasance and corruption on the part of both government officials and the police department in Bell. The investigation showed that some city officials received improperly large salaries and that city

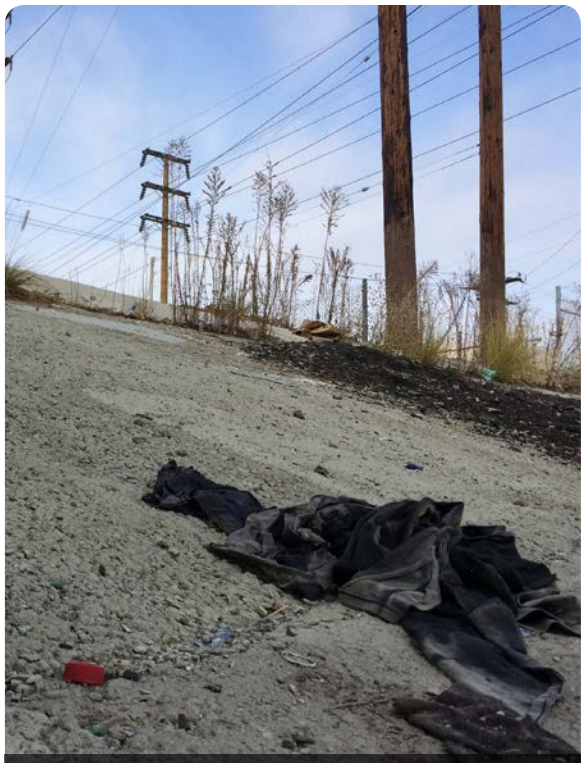
Bell City Hall


The conviction of city councilman Robert Rizzo along with eight other City of Bell employees has tarnished the city's reputation.
Source: LA Times

manager Robert Rizzo was earning $787,637 a year (Gottlieb & Vives, 2010). In September 2010, eight former and current City of Bell employees were arrested including the city manager, assistant city manager, and the police chief. On April 16th, 2014, Robert Rizzo was sentenced to 12 years in prison and fined nearly $9 million in restitution (Gottlieb & Vives, 2010).

This dark history irreparably damaged Bell's reputation (as evidenced by its standing at the top of Yahoo's 2015 "Worst Small Cities in America"), making it far more difficult to acquire funds from the county for city improvement or construction projects.

Many residents lamented the city's decline in the aftermath of the scandal, claiming that before the scandal the city was a far nicer place to live. For many residents, its cleanliness and beauty were factors in choosing to live in Bell. As the city's upkeep of public space has declined due in part to diminishing financial resources, many residents indicated a reduced interest in using the area's public open space, in particular the Los Angeles River.



Use of the river has declined according to many residents, who cited the lack of maintenance and appearance as the primary reasons.

Past and Future Projects

Pritchard Field Project

This four acre piece of land is currently owned jointly by the City of Bell and the Department of Finance's Redevelopment Agency. The site, which was once a baseball field, was slated to become the Bell Sports Complex. From 2004 to 2007 the city issued bonds to begin the project and spent roughly $7 million on design services. However, challenges related to land acquisition, utilities relocation, and the Bell corruption scandal have delayed implementation, and the site remains a vacant lot behind a chain link fence (City of Bell, 2014).

'Rail to River' Project

Randolph Street begins at Long Beach Avenue in the west and continues to the Los Angeles River, passing through Huntington Park and Bell on the way. The railroad along Randolph Street belongs to Union Pacific, and remains active. The 'Rail to River Project' aims to reuse the railroad right-of-way as a multipurpose trail. It was proposed by the Metropolitan Transit Authority in early 2012 and Phase I of the project received $15 million in funding (Sulaiman, 2015). In the *Rail-to-River Intermediate Active Transportation Corridor (ATC) Feasibility Study*,

Despite the five years that have passed since the city's scandal, city operations and services have not returned to normal, as evidenced by the trash which continues to litter city streets.

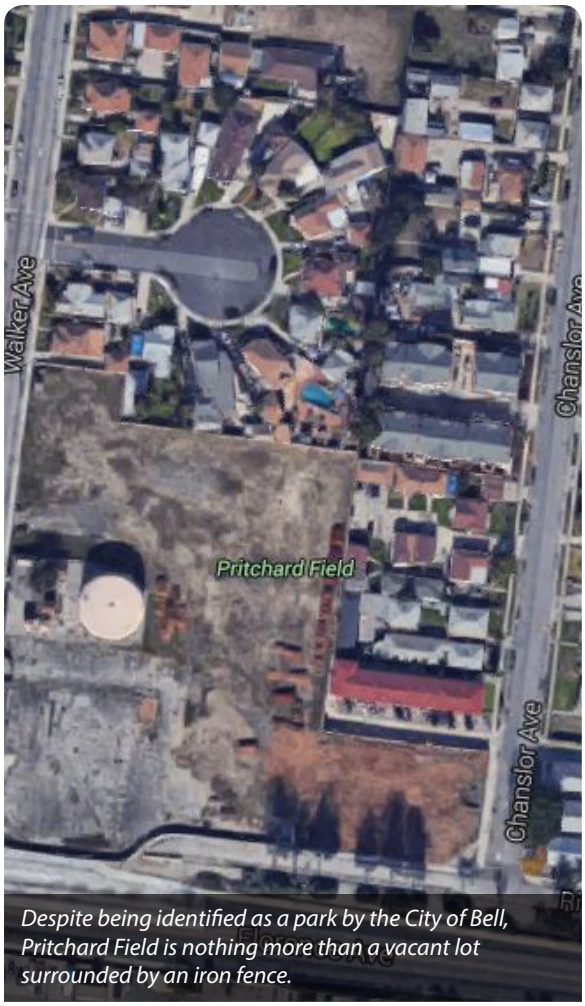
Phase I is primarily located in south Los Angeles along Slauson Avenue from Denker Avenue to Metro Crenshaw/LAX LRT Crenshaw/Slauson Station (Metro, 2014). The new trail will connect the Gold, Silver and Blue Metro lines. Phase II is intended to create a path leading users to the Los Angeles River. Randolph Street is the leading choice among four alternative proposals for connecting users to the river (Metro, 2014).

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Proposal

In March 2013, students and faculty from the Community and Regional Planning Studio III at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, developed a proposal for a multi-use trail along the Randolph Street railroad tracks. This proposal would create both bicycle and pedestrian connections to the neighboring cities of Maywood, Huntington Park, Bell Gardens and Commerce along the rail lines, as well as enhance the quality of life in Bell del Río by providing a new recreational amenity for residents (Siembieda, 2013).

Huntington Park Bicycle Master Plan

The Huntington Park Bicycle Master Plan was developed by Evan Brooks Associates in 2014 for the City of Huntington Park (EBA, 2014). The plan's goal is to improve cycling in the City of Huntington Park. The Bicycle Master Plan stops at the City of Huntington Park and City of Bell boundaries.



Despite being identified as a park by the City of Bell, Pritchard Field is nothing more than a vacant lot surrounded by an iron fence.

The "Rail to River" Plan proposes an active transportation corridor in the railroad right-of-way parallel to Randolph Street (from the 2014 Rail-to-River Intermediate Active Transportation Corridor Feasibility Study)

Table 5.3 Bell Past and Future Projects and Relevance to Bell del Río Neighborhood

Project	Relevancy to Bell del Río Neighborhood
Pritchard Field Project	This project was intended to involve the creation of a baseball field. However, due to unforeseen challenges related to land acquisition, utilities relocation, and delays resulting from the Bell corruption scandal, the land remains vacant. The city is still making efforts to move the project forward.
"Rail to River" Project	The project involves construction of a pedestrian and bicycle corridor along Randolph Street to the northern boundary of the neighborhood. The project will reduce the number of homeless encampments, mitigate vandalism, create a safer environment in the railroad right-of-way, and provide better living conditions for the community.
San Luis Obispo Proposal	The proposal connects the City of Bell to its neighboring cities by creating bicycle and pedestrian trails, and enhances quality of life in the community by building a recreational amenity for residents.
Huntington Park Bicycle Master Plan	This project will establish a comprehensive bicycle transportation system, provide a safer biking environment for Bell residents and students, and connect the City of Bell with neighboring cities.

Experiential Quality

When asked to describe their neighborhood, residents repeatedly used the word "quiet." Beyond this, perceptions of the neighborhood vary greatly from street to street.

River Drive

One of the most striking features of River Drive is the lack of shade due to the absence of street trees. While residents have planted some trees, these are generally small potted trees and do not provide much shade on the street.

Safety is a significant issue for residents of River Drive. Neighbors fear homeless people, drug dealing, and other types of crime associated with the river. One neighbor claimed that the prevalence of drug dealing prevents people from using the river. Residents also complained about the trash and syringes that litter the river's banks.

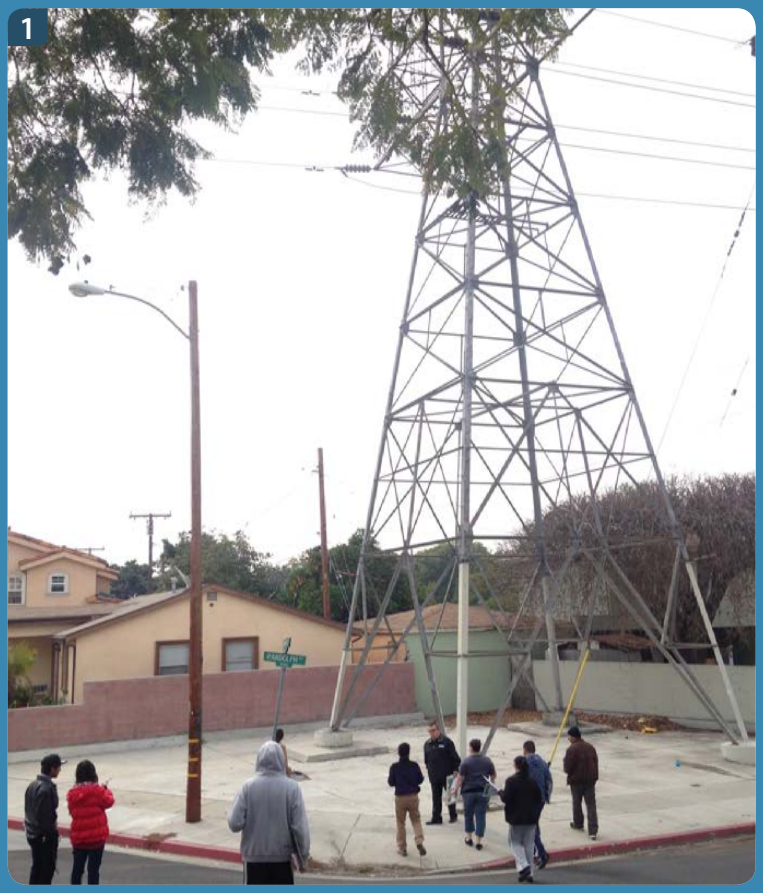
The vegetation along the river path is perceived as a threat rather than an amenity by residents, as it limits views of the river and thus creates potential hiding places for offenders. In general, the residents' attitude toward the police department was one of distrust.

Casitas Avenue

Residents living on Casitas Avenue have a more optimistic view of their neighborhood. Casitas Avenue is a neatly maintained street with almost 43% tree canopy coverage (iTree, 2016). In sharp contrast to residents of River Drive, people living on Casitas Avenue consider the Los Angeles River to be a neighborhood amenity and a good place for biking, jogging and dog walking with family members.

Residents of River Drive suggested removing vegetation along the river path to improve visibility.

Figure 5.1 Experiential Quality in Bell del Río Neighborhood



3

1 Situated beneath a transmission tower, the corner of Randolph Street and River Drive is popular for dumping discarded furniture and other trash.

2 Walker Avenue is one of Bell del Río's busiest streets.

3 Located on the eastern edge of Bell del Río, the high levee wall and vegetation of the Los Angeles River Bike Path characterizes River Drive.

4 The railway right-of-way broadens near the intersection of Walker Avenue and Randolph Street and accommodates large pine trees.

5 While the corner of Randolph Street and River Drive is popular with neighbors due to its informal river access, some residents find it unpleasant because of the poorly maintained railway right-of-way.

Residents of Casitas Avenue also make frequent use of their front yard space, and hold parties there with friends and family during the weekend. Overall, residents of Casitas Avenue are comparatively satisfied with their current living environment and were not concerned about security and cleanliness issues to the extent of residents living on other streets.

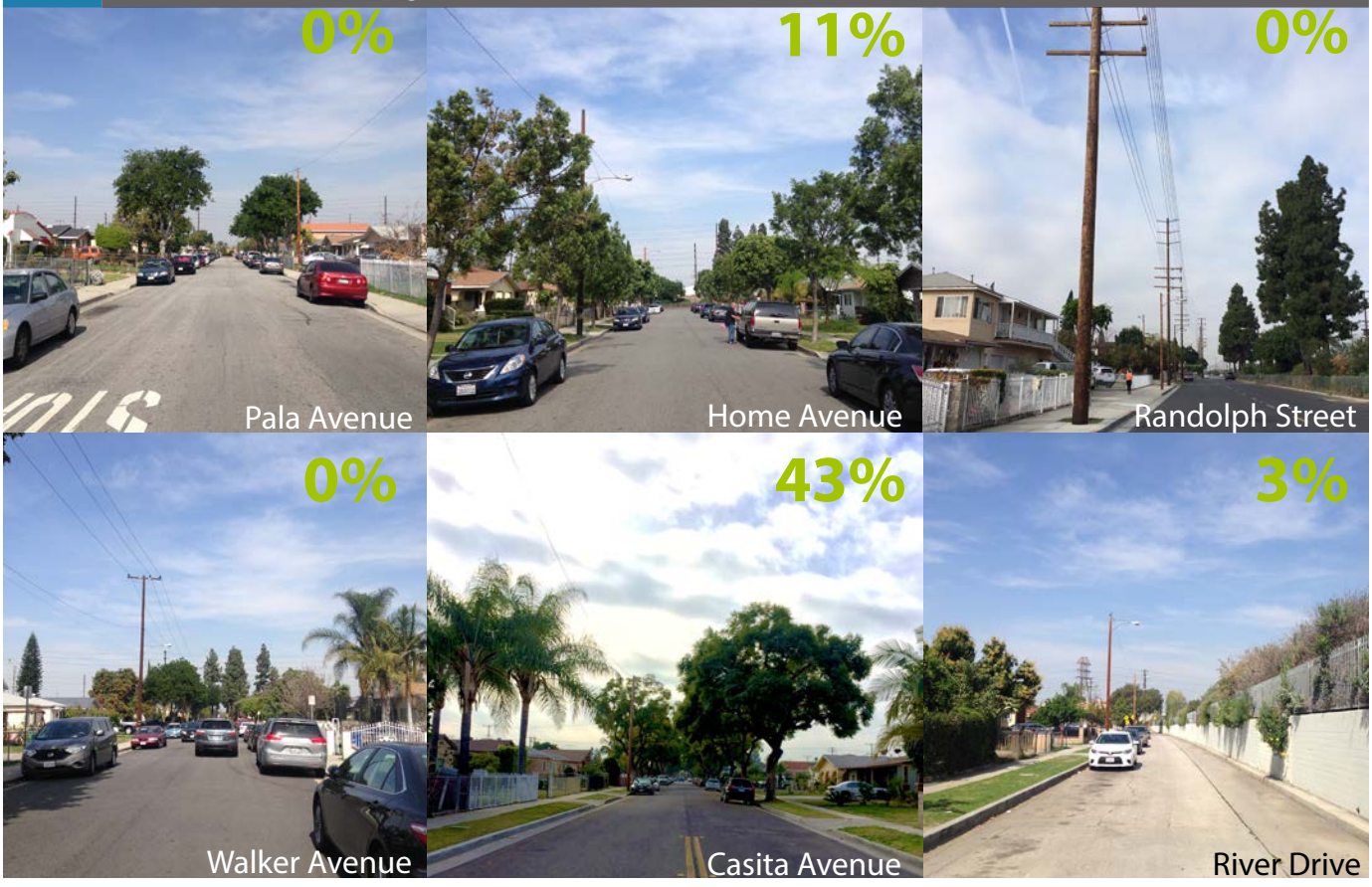
Home Avenue and Walker Avenue

Few street trees are planted on Home Avenue, and those that exist are too small to cast significant shade. Walker Avenue is lacking in any street trees (iTree, 2016). Large trees on private property create some shade.

Off-street parking and driving speeds are two concerns frequently repeated by the residents of Home Avenue and Walker Avenue. Overnight parking is not allowed on these two streets, nor is parking during peak hours (from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) with violators being fined $200. For some big families with five or six cars, the only place to park is the front yard, damaging

Residents make frequent use of front yards for leisure activities.

Figure 5.2 Public Tree Cover Percentage



the landscape. High traffic speeds threaten pedestrian safety on Walker Avenue, a popular choice of joggers (see Safety and Security).

Randolph Street

Randolph Street lacks street trees entirely with the exception of small palm trees and shrubs in the railroad right-of-way, and these are too small to create shade. Randolph Street is a common walking and jogging route for both students from nearby schools and local residents.

Noise is a frequent complaint of residents of Randolph Street. The noise from the train horn has a range of 80 to 90 dBA (Redden, 2005). For the most part this pertained to noise created by the trains passing at night and blowing their horn. One resident also described regularly hearing gunshots from neighboring Maywood. Trash is also a primary concern of Randolph Street residents, with many neighbors complaining about the prevalence of trash, leaf litter, and dog feces in the streets and utilities corridor.

Residents' care for front yard space is meticulous, and the space is heavily used for recreational purposes.

Neighborhood Identity

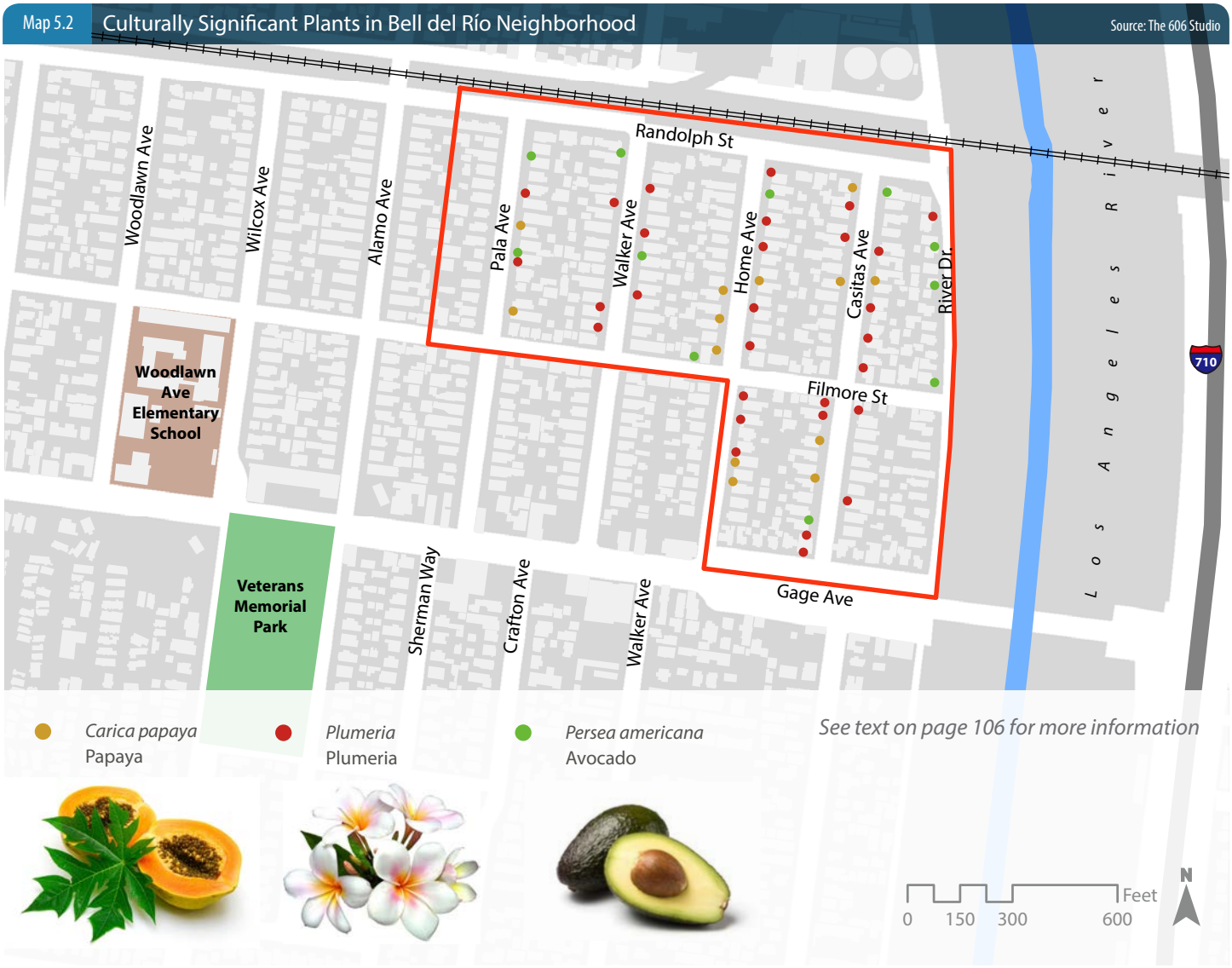
The fear of crime and sense of insecurity are unifying factors in this neighborhood, and this manifests itself physically through the prevalence of fenced homes and guard dogs (see Safety and Security).

As discussed in the Neighborhood Demographics section, the neighborhood is predominantly Latino. This culture is particularly evident in the plants used in the residential landscape. As stated by the residents, the plants that are common in Mexico dot the front yards throughout the neighborhood (see Map 5.2). Additionally the residents stated that these plants alleviate homesickness by reminding residents of their hometowns in Mexico. Latino cultural identity is also evident in the religious artifacts around residents' homes, such as crosses, angel statues, and paintings of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Nicho statues and other religious artifacts are common in front yard spaces.

Map 5.2 Culturally Significant Plants in Bell del Río Neighborhood

Source: The 606 Studio



See text on page 106 for more information

Recreation

The neighborhood suffers from both a lack of park facilities and long walking distances from residents' homes to parks. Only a small portion of the neighborhood is within a quarter mile of a park (see Map 5.3). The nearest formal park, Veteran's Memorial Park, is located 0.3 miles from the neighborhood and across Gage Avenue, a busy street that many residents are reluctant to cross.

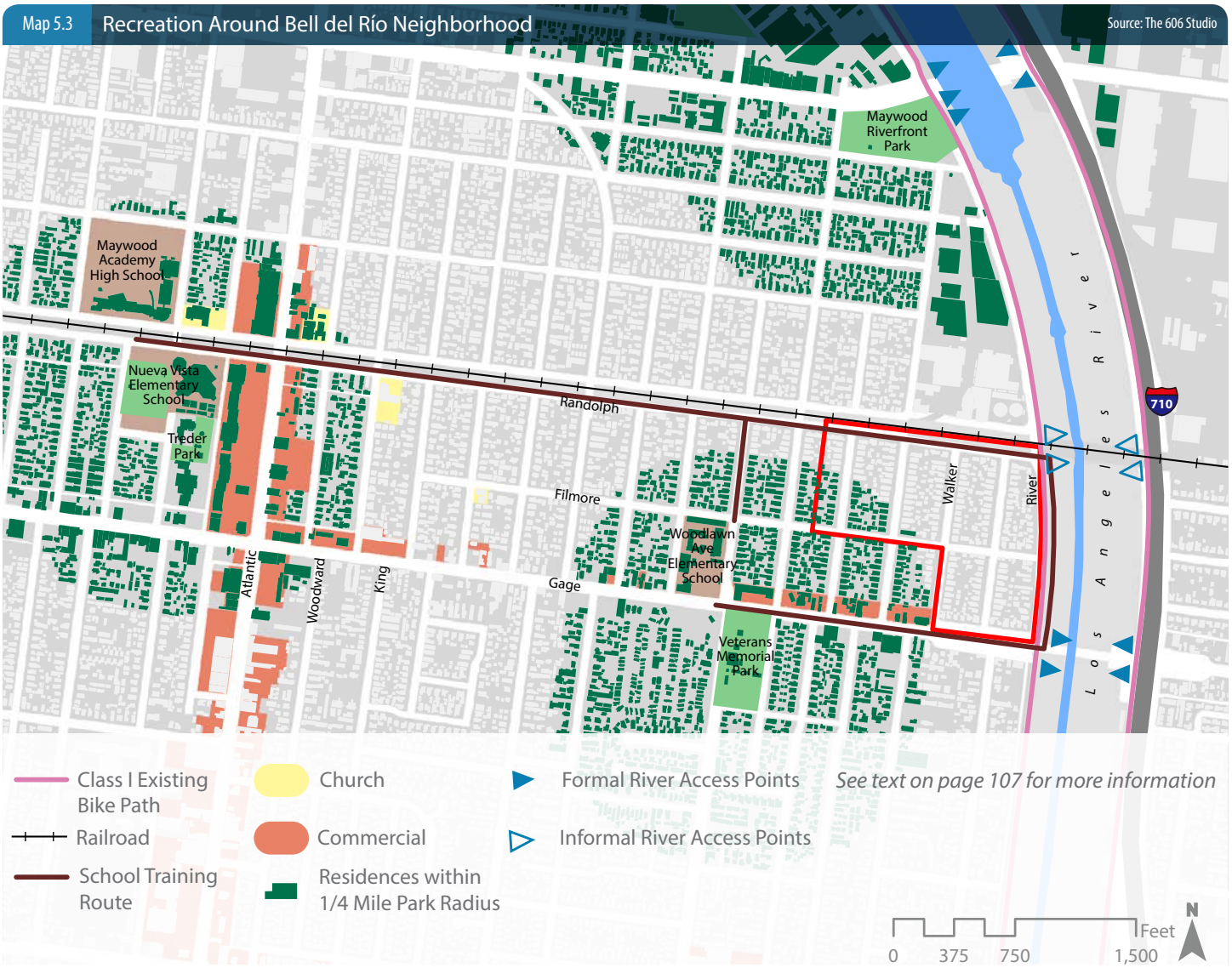
While there is a lack of formal recreational opportunities in the neighborhood, residents generally expressed contentment with their recreational opportunities due to informal opportunities. Mapping exercises revealed the locations of these recreational opportunities to be among the residents' favorite places. The railroad right-of-way serves as an informal hiking trail that is frequently used for exercise and dog walking. As this informal path is elevated above street level, residents can get a view of the entire neighborhood while walking. An informal entrance to the Los Angeles River Bike Path is also provided via a slope on River Drive. While many residents did list the river path as a favorite location, others expressed their complete refusal to use the area due to safety concerns (see Safety and Security).

Residents make frequent use of their front yards as social spaces to host friends and family for birthday parties and memorial services. Neighbors may pass entire afternoons on their front lawns, conversing on chairs or swings.

Local government officials have expressed concerns that an increase in park space will lead to rising crime rates. The Bell Police Department has indicated that any new parks will lead to an increase in their workload, requiring an increased budget for additional

Map 5.3 Recreation Around Bell del Río Neighborhood

Source: The 606 Studio



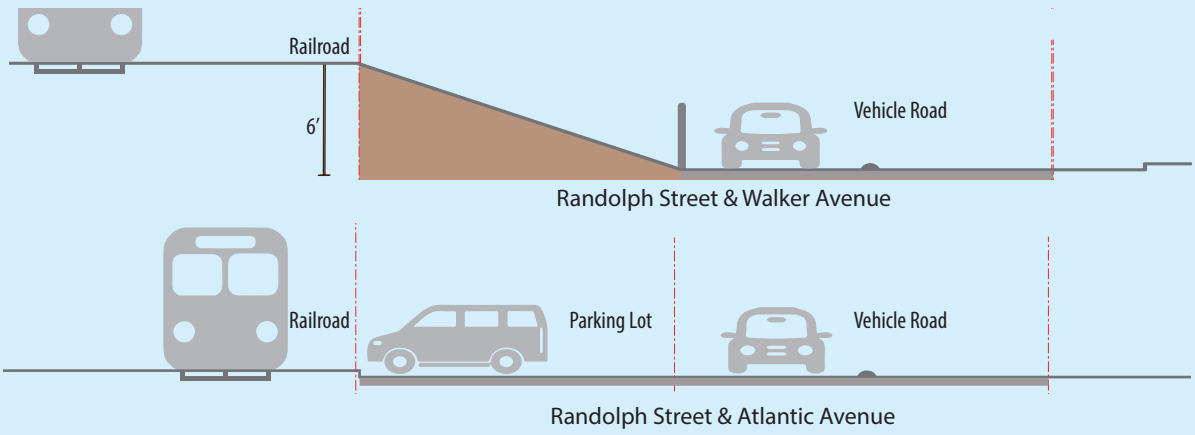
See text on page 107 for more information

staff. Furthermore, city officials indicated that there are no funds for building and maintaining new parks, due to the aftermath of the 2010 scandal.

Residents hold a very different attitude toward parks and open space. While crime and safety remain key concerns for residents, neighbors nevertheless hope that the city will develop more parks and open spaces in their neighborhood. There is a strong feeling that more opportunities for outdoor recreation would enrich the lives of residents, create social opportunities, and enhance their leisure time.

Seating areas are common in neighborhood front yards.

Figure 5.3 Randolph Street Section



While a parking lot exists at the intersection of Randolph Street and Atlantic Avenue, parking is lacking along the railroad right-of-way in the project neighborhood.

Patterns of Life

Mapping community members' preferred neighborhood walking routes (see Map 5.4) led to the realization that the Los Angeles River Bike Path and Randolph Street are two of the neighborhood's most popular walking corridors. The results also demonstrated that the locations they perceive to be unsafe are the same as their preferred routes. For example, the Los Angeles River was a common favorite location due to the view and to the potential for recreation. The river was also considered to be an unsafe place, as many residents shared stories of crime and drug use that they had witnessed.

Another favorite location among residents was the railroad right-of-way. Like the river, the railroad provides a location for outdoor recreation within the neighborhood, but is also considered to be a highly unsafe location due to the presence of homeless people and drug dealing.

The river path is a common destination for families and pet owners.

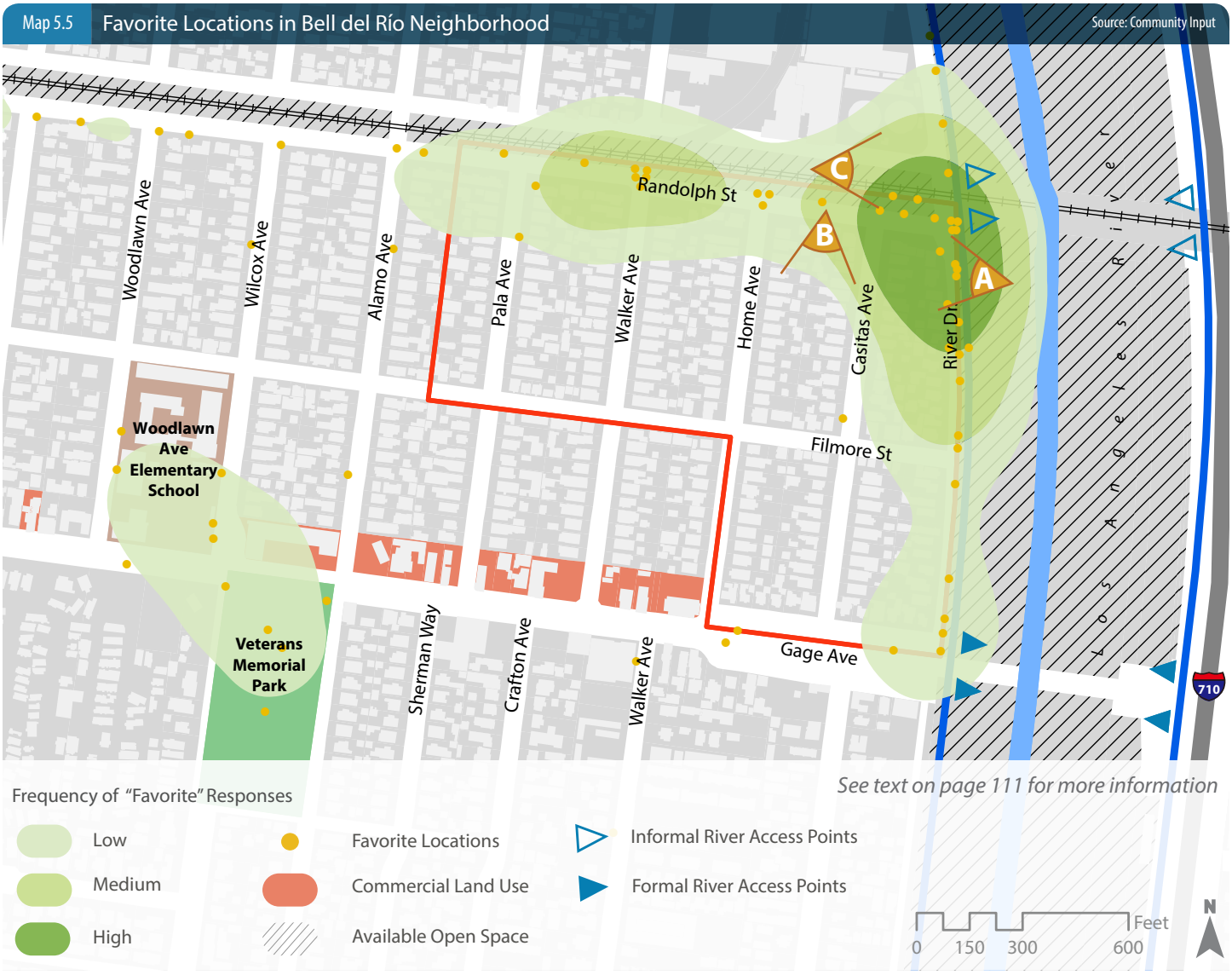
Map 5.4 Common Walking Routes in Bell del Río Neighborhood

Source: Community Input

See text on page 109 for more information

Map 5.5 Favorite Locations in Bell del Río Neighborhood

Source: Community Input



See text on page 111 for more information

Frequency of "Favorite" Responses

- Low
- Medium
- High

- Favorite Locations
- Commercial Land Use
- Available Open Space

- Informal River Access Points
- Formal River Access Points

0 150 300 600 Feet

N

Despite being prohibited, residents commonly use the Los Angeles River bottom and nearby railroad corridor as recreational space.

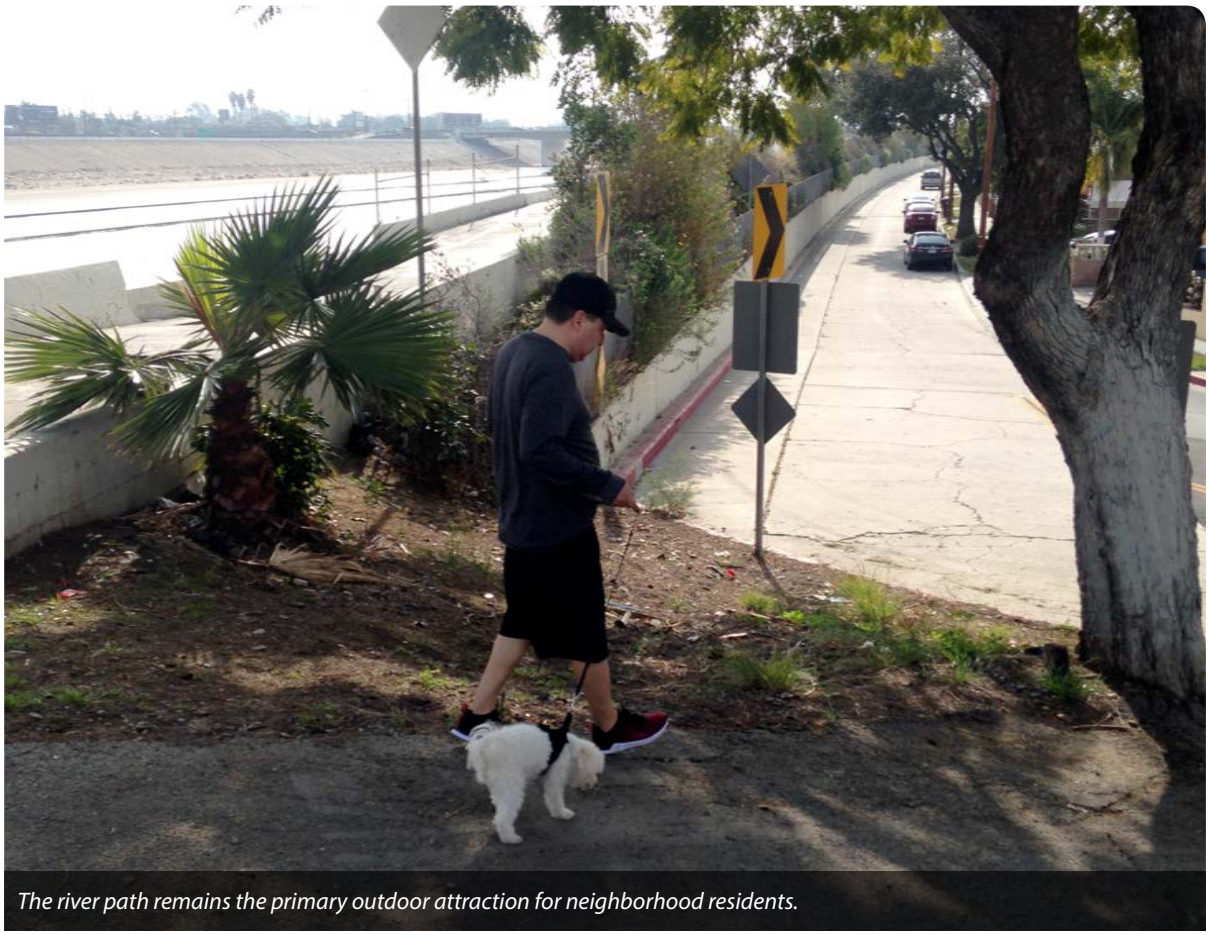
Safety and Security

Safety is a vital issue for residents, with the threats posed by crime and homeless people in the community and along the river the primary concerns. The majority of homes are fenced, and guard dogs are common. Many residents requested security cameras in the neighborhood. While signs indicate the presence of a Neighborhood Watch group, in reality, no active group exists.

According to the data from AreaVibes.com, property crime is the most frequent offense in the City of Bell, and the overall crime rate in Bell is 9% lower than the average crime rate in California. Nevertheless, most of the neighbors still have safety concerns. When asked about river use, many neighbors cited fears of harassment and attacks from both the homeless people who live under the bridges and/or the drug users who spend time near the river. This fear was particularly prevalent among residents of River Drive, the road closest to the river.

Accounts of crime near the river are common. One committee member shared stories of witnessing drug deals by the river, and

Poor upkeep of public land increases residents' perceptions that the city is apathetic toward maintenance.



The river path remains the primary outdoor attraction for neighborhood residents.

Map 5.6 Unsafe Locations in Bell del Río Neighborhood

Source: Community Input

See text on page 111 for more information

Broken glass and pill bottles are common sights along this portion of the Los Angeles River Bike Path.

Pet owners' failure to clean up after their dogs is a repeated complaint of residents.

bemoaned the presence of hypodermic needles and prescription bottles. Another resident reported being robbed at knife point by three teenagers while walking his dog on the river path at night. The man's frustration only increased when, after informing the Bell Police of the event, he was asked for proof of the amount of money in his wallet. He was also informed that, while the police were aware of the three thieves, he should call the Maywood Police Department, as the crime technically occurred in their jurisdiction. The resident felt frustrated that the police were aware of the unsafe conditions near the river, yet did nothing to address it.

Residents on River Drive felt that the recently planted vegetation along the river path promoted illicit activities near their homes by allowing people a place to hide while breaking the law.

Additionally, many neighbors complained about the fast speeding along Walker Avenue and Randolph Street. According to one resident, Walker Avenue previously had speed bumps but the city removed them when repairing the street. As many neighbors, including nearby residents and students from the local school, use Randolph Street for jogging and dog walking, speeding cars are a significant potential safety threat.

Locked patio furniture attests to residents' concerns about security.

Neighborhood Watch exists in name only in the project neighborhood.

Implications For Design

The Bell del Río neighborhood is a quiet neighborhood with limited park access. The residents use their front yard and the Los Angeles River Bike Path as their prime recreational resources. Although some residents perceive the Los Angeles River Bike Path and the railway right-of-way as unsafe, for many residents, it is their favorite and only location for outdoor recreation. These underutilized resources should be improved due to their high use.

The inventory process helped the project team to involve community members in the entire data collection process and gain a deep understanding of the neighborhood. The Bell del Río neighborhood is a culturally expressive place, where the neighbors reflect their cultural identity in their elaborate front yard decor, vibrant colors, and culturally significant plant materials.

Through the inventory process, the team learned that the intersection of Walker Avenue and Randolph Street is an area favored by motorists for speeding. This poses a significant safety threat to the community as pedestrians use the street as a main access point to the Los Angeles River. The residents wanted speed bumps and stop signs to calm traffic. Residents also requested the removal of dense shrubs along the Los Angeles River Bike Path to increase visibility.

Because of the city's history of racial tension and the recent corruption scandal, residents still do not trust the local government. However, there are many projects planned in the surrounding area, making it a potential target for future improvements.

Residents compensate for the lack of formal recreational space through creative solutions, such as this basketball hoop fixed to the LA River levee wall.

While neighbors living further west see the river as an amenity, to residents of River Road it is primarily a security threat.

DESIGN PROCESS AND RESULTS

Organization Building

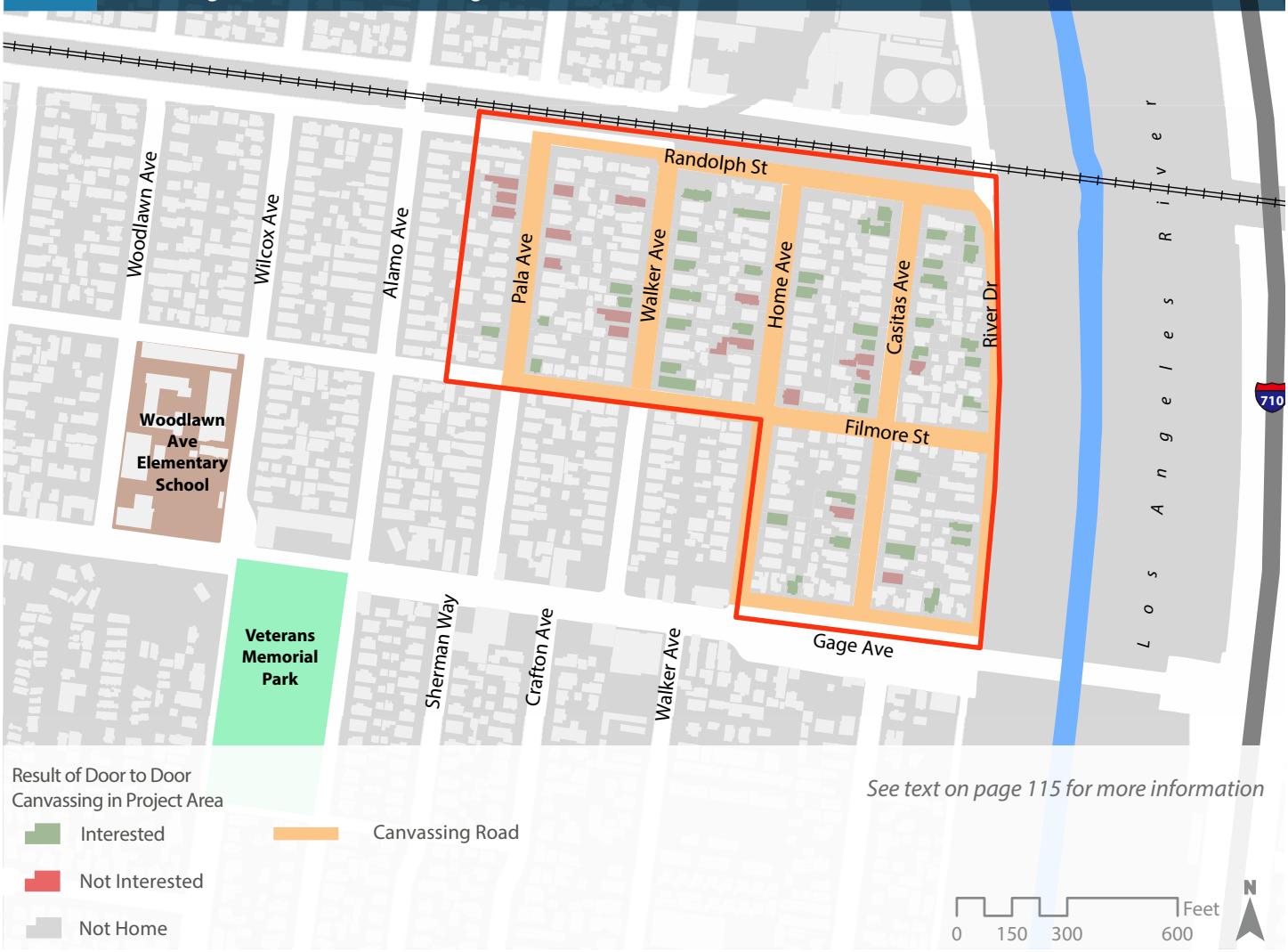
The project team used canvassing and steering committee meetings during the organization building phase of the project. As described in the Methods section, the project team canvassed the neighborhood, visiting homes on each of the neighborhood's streets. The goal of the canvassing process was to identify a core group of residents who were enthusiastic about the project and could serve as steering committee members.

Through going door-to-door, the project team engaged neighbors in informal conversations and asked questions about their experience in the neighborhood, their ideas for improving the quality of life of the neighborhood, and their views about the river path and the railway right-of-way. This experience helped the project team to better understand the neighbors and their concerns. The neighborhood was divided into five streets that were covered during the eight canvassing sessions (see Map 5.7). The project team collected the contact information of interested neighbors. The project team also prepared outreach materials such as bilingual (Spanish/English) flyers and personalized business cards for canvassing (see Appendix B.14).

While the group sought a committee that was demographically representative of the community, this proved to be a challenge. While several teenagers expressed interest during canvassing, they did not respond to future communications.

Map 5.7 Canvassing Results in Bell del Río Neighborhood

Source: The 606 Studio



See text on page 115 for more information

As a result of the canvassing, the project team collected contact information from 45 neighbors. They shortlisted 19 members who had shown special interest in the project. From the 19 shortlisted members, the project team finally identified seven members to take a leadership role on the steering committee. However, recruiting members for this type of position proved challenging in the project neighborhood, as many neighbors work during the weekends and had no time to participate.

The second step in organization building was steering committee meetings. The project team held two steering committees meeting in the initial stage of the project, both of which suffered from a lack of participants.

The goal of the first steering committee meeting was to bring the neighbors together, fully introduce the project, answer questions from the participants, and plan next steps.

The project team invited the 19 interested candidates by sending out personalized letters three days prior to the meeting followed by a reminder phone call and text a day before the meeting. The meeting was attended by seven people: three neighbors, three leaders from the Parents' Center and the school principal. The project team prepared an enlarged aerial image of the neighborhood highlighting key features.

The meeting started with a brief introduction from each attendee and the project team. Then the team asked the participants to mark their homes on an aerial image of the neighborhood. This exercise helped the neighbors familiarize themselves with the aerial map. The project team discussed the types of projects that could benefit the neighborhood. The neighbors proposed a vegetable garden, running trail, chicken coop, dog park, and exercise equipment in the railroad right-of-way. The neighbors also put a sticker on all possible project locations.

The second steering committee meeting was held to prepare for the first community meeting. The goal of this meeting was to perform a trial site walk with the steering committee members, get their feedback on improving the site walk

Committee members were invited via mailed invitations. During the meeting, members planned potential routes for the upcoming community site walk.

for the future community meeting, as well as distribute flyers and invite neighbors to the upcoming community meeting.

When residents were not at home, the project team placed flyers in their mailboxes. The steering committee members were also asked to inform their neighbors about the forthcoming meeting.

Despite many efforts from the project team and the steering committee members, the response from the community was poor in the initial project phase. Later community meetings were conducted at a busy intersection in the neighborhood and attracted passersby, curious to learn about the project. On average, the broader community meetings were attended by 12 to 15 participants with attendance increasing by one or two new members each meeting. After three community meetings, the project team was able to identify seven neighbors that were interested in serving on the steering committee.

The team designed and distributed bilingual flyers to neighborhood homes.

Site Selection

Site selection was accomplished at two community meetings. The first of these meetings included a site selection walk intended to identify potential locations for the design-build project.

The second site selection meeting focused on narrowing and prioritizing the list of possible sites.

The project team distributed flyers with the help of steering committee members (see Appendix B.2). Additionally, the project team made phone calls the day prior to the meeting to ensure the attendance of interested neighbors. The project team prepared a presentation package including photos of sample projects that used the sidewalks, streets, intersections, empty lots, and remnant open spaces as sites. The meetings employed open discussions, a site selection walk, and mapping exercises to facilitate site selection.

The project team began the first community meeting by asking participants the question, “What are the characteristics of a good site?” The project team heard comments such as “There is no open space in this neighborhood. What do you plan to do?” It was important to

Committee members assist with project outreach before an event, distributing flyers to local residents.

provide a range of ideas about what types of spaces could be sites for the improvement project.

The site selection walk was conducted on Saturday, January 23, 2016. The walk began at the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue and covered segments of Randolph Street, River Drive, Filmore Street, Pala Avenue, Gage Avenue and the river access ramp. There were 15 participants at the meeting, ten of whom participated in the mapping exercise. The neighbors and project team walked the neighborhood to identify multiple potential sites. Ledger sized aerial photos mounted on cardboard were given to each participant who were encouraged to identify potential project sites by drawing and placing stickers on the map, making notes, and sharing their thoughts verbally with the project team (see Appendix B.3-4).

As a result of the site selection process, the neighbors identified a wide range of potential sites including street segments, intersections, remnant spaces along sidewalks, the bare river levee wall along River Drive, a paved area under a power line and various other underutilized spaces. Collectively, the participants chose nine potential sites (see the image on the next page) that included Randolph Street, the space around the river access ramp, an area in the railroad right-of-way surrounded by large pine trees, several intersections along Walker Avenue, a segment of Filmore Street leading to River Drive, and the intersection of Gage Avenue and River Drive.

The next community meeting was conducted on Saturday, January 30, 2016. The goal of this meeting was to narrow the nine proposed locations to three prioritized locations. The meeting location and time were kept the same as earlier meetings. The project team also made reminder phone calls to all the site walk participants and prepared flyers that were distributed with the help of steering committee members. The project team prepared a presentation package for the participants containing the meeting agenda and details about topics to be covered.

The project team asked participants to consider the characteristics of a good project site and started the conversation by providing a few sample criteria such as safety, visibility, and accessibility. This exercise helped community members think analytically about the sites and prepared them for the next exercise. The neighbors came up with criteria such as safety,

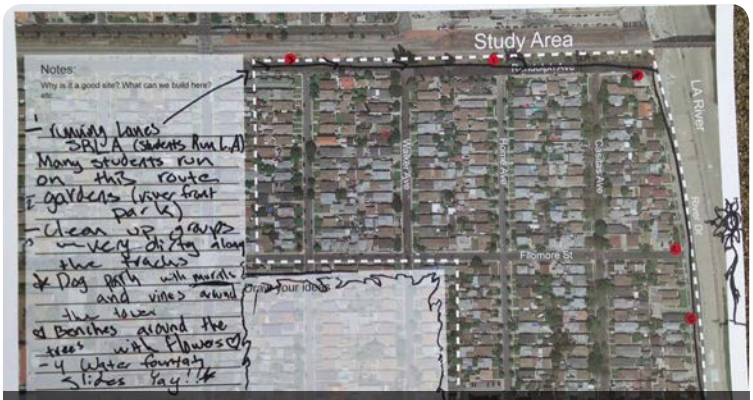
Team members challenge residents to consider the potential of various sites in their neighborhood. Residents provide written evaluations of each site.

the ability to serve the whole neighborhood, lighting, visibility and views, traffic control, future expansion, low maintenance, shade and sun. Community members also discussed issues such as the need for stop signs at the intersection of Randolph and Walker Avenue and reckless driving on Walker Avenue (see Appendix B.6).

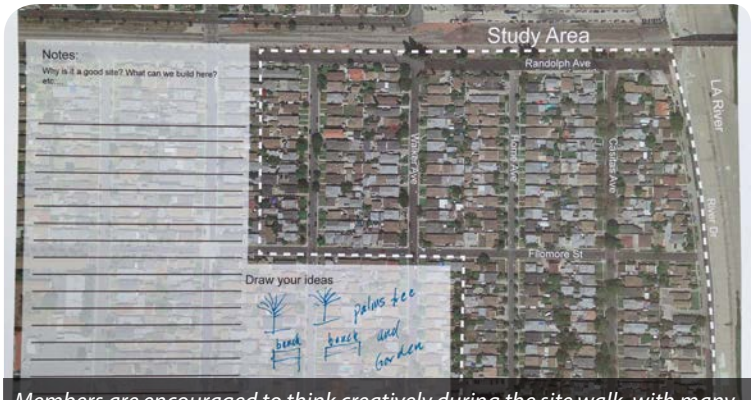
The project team asked participants to list the advantages and disadvantages of each site along with additional information relevant to the sites, such as problems related to acquiring approval from multiple agencies, types of existing vegetation and access to the Los Angeles River (see Appendix B.7).

The project team then facilitated a ranking exercise to identify the community's three preferred sites. Each participant was given three stickers to mark their preferred choices.

As a result of the voting process, the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue was selected as the community's top choice, followed by a segment of Randolph Street between Walker Avenue and River Drive. The third priority was the river access ramp at the corner of Randolph Street and River Drive (see Appendix B.7).



Aerial maps provide community members a place to share their thoughts on each site.



Members are encouraged to think creatively during the site walk, with many providing sketches of their desired improvements.

This map, prepared for the community, shows potential sites identified through the site selection process.

Site 1: Intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue

Neighbors chose the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue as their top choice for improvements. Neighbors explained that they chose this site because of a desire to address the issue of reckless driving through the intersection.

Neighbors also chose this location for the potential implicit in its location adjacent to the railroad right-of-way. Participants felt that this space could accommodate seating, and that the area beneath the tall pine trees could be converted into a small park.

Site 2: Randolph Street

The neighbors ranked Randolph Street as their second preferred option. The neighbors liked this site due to its connection to the Los Angeles River. The intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive contains a ramp to the Los Angeles River and many residents use this street to access the river bike path daily, walking along the railroad right-of-way or on the sidewalk on Randolph Street.

The sidewalk on Randolph Street has no trees and thus no shade. In contrast, the railroad right-of-way contains some trees on its northern side, but suffers from homeless encroachment and unattractive vegetation.

Residents felt that improvements were urgent due to the street's high degree of pedestrian use. Residents also suggested that Randolph Street is wide enough to accommodate a bike lane, seating areas, walking paths, and additional beautification elements such as trees and planters.

Site 3: River Access

The neighbors chose the river access ramp as their third preferred project location. This site was popular as a way to help the wider community access the river path. The informal access route from Randolph Street is used frequently by many residents (see Section 5.3). The existing condition of the formal access ramp is poor and unsafe area (see Section 5.3). This area could function as an enjoyable open space for the neighborhood and the wider community as well as connect residents to the river through access to the river path.

Outdoor workshops held in public locations encourage community members unfamiliar with the project to participate.

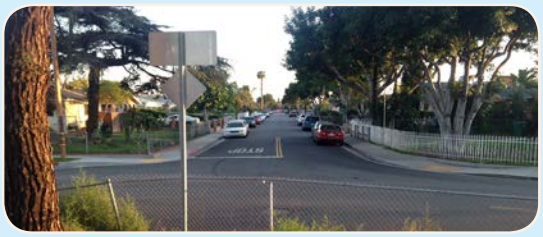
Community members brainstorm the criteria for a suitable project site.

Community members vote on their top three sites using dotmocracy.

Figure 5.4 Top Sites

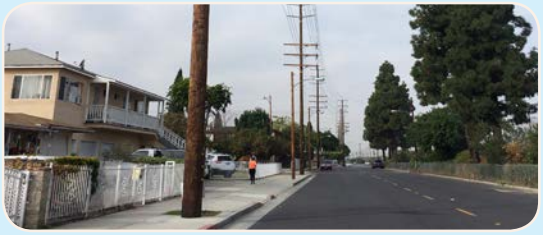
Site 1

Intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue



Site 2

Randolph Street



Site 3

River Access

Approval Process

Neighborhood residents were generally distrustful of the city government due to recent political scandals and were skeptical of the government's ability to make positive improvements. The project team met with city officials from the beginning of the project but received conflicting feedback from city staff. The project team approached various city departments to identify allies who could aid in moving the project forward. The staff members who showed interest at the beginning of the process were helpful resources in navigating the city administration in the later stages of the project. This process affected the project in various ways, such as the timing of community meetings, their locations, the people involved and the types of improvements considered for the design-build project.

Additionally, as all of the community's selected sites were located on public land, the project team was faced with the challenge of working with multiple agencies to obtain approval. Identifying and working with the enthusiastic individuals from the city staff made it possible to navigate this process. However, the community's immediate needs had to be compromised due to the constraints of city approval processes and the project's short time frame.

Randolph Street was chosen as the project site due to the connection it provides to the Los Angeles River.

Program

The project's program was determined over several community and steering committee meetings using techniques such as brainstorming, open discussions and comparative exercises. The team asked the neighbors, "How can we improve our neighborhood?" at the beginning of each community and steering committee meeting. The neighbors were asked to record their comments on the sticky notes provided with the presentation package. At the end of each brainstorming session, the team collected the notes (see Appendix B.4) and recorded the results.

The project team shared a diverse range of sample projects at these community meetings and asked the participants what they liked. Neighbors were able to relate to the samples and suggested various analogous improvements in their neighborhood. This exercise helped formulate the program.

At the second community meeting, comparative exercises were used to analyze the possibilities of each of the sites. During the site selection phase, the project team asked the neighbors about what kind of improvements they would like to see at each potential site. This exercise also contributed to a more site-specific program for each location. However, it was observed early in the process that for the neighbors, site and program were not separate issues. Rather, program was inextricably connected to the site and neighbors had ideas about specific improvements at specific sites rather than general programmatic desires for the neighborhood.

In general, the neighbors discussed the following improvements:

- Community garden at the Randolph Street and River Drive intersection.
- Benches under the tall pine trees in the railroad right-of-way.
- Murals on the river levee wall adjacent to River Drive.
- Clearing the vegetation along the river path at Randolph Street.
- A kids play area at the Gage and River Drive intersection.
- Dog park/community garden at the Randolph Street and River Drive intersection.
- A water fountain at the Gage and River Drive intersection.
- Trash removal and water conserving plants in the railroad right-of-way.

Community members share their vision for the project and the neighborhood.

Design

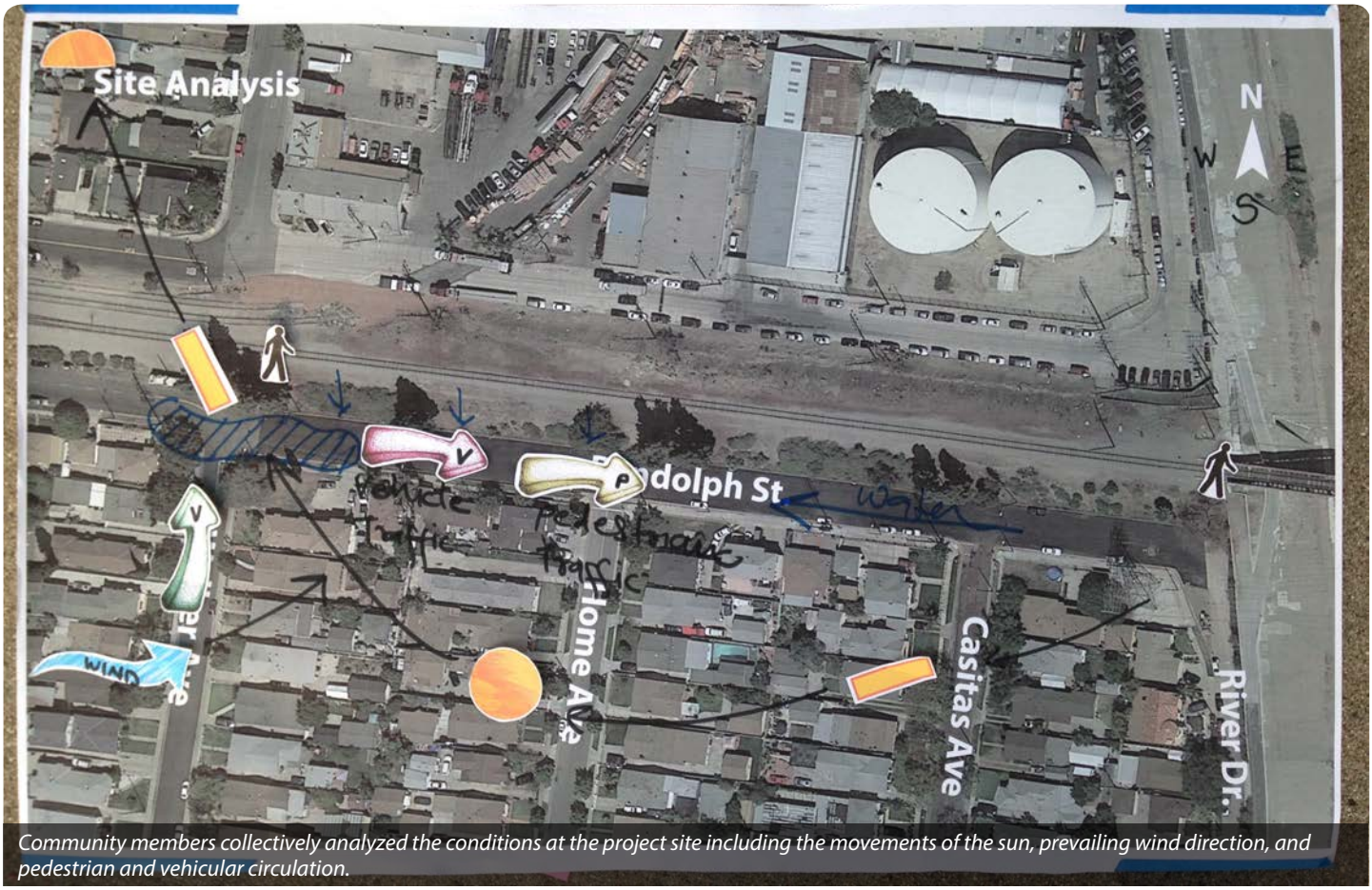
The next step of the process was to generate conceptual alternatives for the three prioritized sites. The project team facilitated several design workshops to make design decisions. The project team invited the neighbors via personalized invitation letters sent three days prior to the design workshop followed by reminder phone calls a day prior to the workshop.

The project team used mapping exercises and a design workshop to accomplish preliminary site analysis. Given the high degree of interconnectivity between the three sites, a collective site analysis was performed. The project team asked participants to discuss the location and movements of the sun, wind direction, and both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This information was documented on a large aerial map. The participants provided information on water movement and areas that flood during storms. The community suggested that the corner of Randolph Street and River Drive has the highest elevation and thus water flows in the opposite direction towards the Walker Avenue intersection. Residents also indicated heavy pedestrian traffic along the railroad right-of-way and the river access ramp and heavy vehicular traffic along Walker Avenue.

The design workshops were used to engage participants in the design process throughout the design phase. The project team conducted a total of three design workshops to develop conceptual design alternatives, final concepts and design details.

The first design workshop was held to create three alternative concepts for each of the three selected sites. The project team started the design workshops by introducing design elements to the participants. They then presented full scale cutouts of various design elements such as planter beds, benches, trash cans, and bike racks. The project team walked the participants through these elements to explain how much space each element occupies and how different arrangements can be created using the elements.

The project team then provided residents with scaled cutouts to facilitate the design process. They divided the participants into three teams ensuring diversity in age and personality. Each



Community members collectively analyzed the conditions at the project site including the movements of the sun, prevailing wind direction, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation.

team consisted of three to four participants plus a project team member, who served as host and assisted the group.

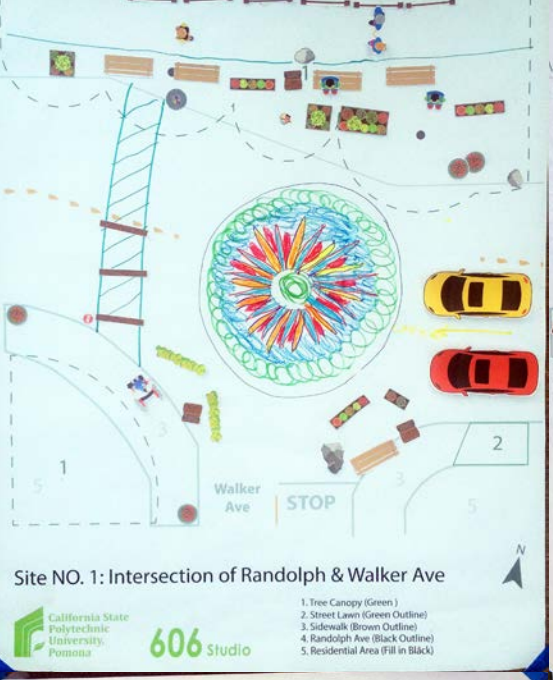
The participants worked on all three sites, creating nine conceptual designs: three alternatives for each site.

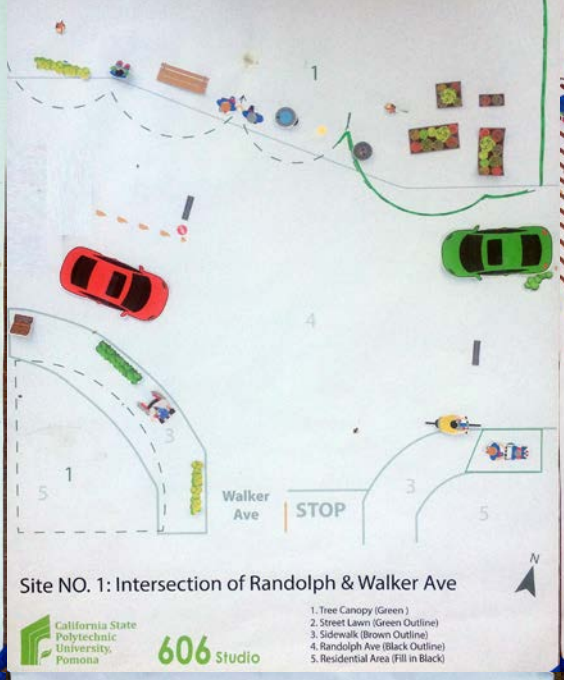
The next step was to consolidate the three concepts into one final conceptual design for each of the three sites. For each location the three community-created concepts had many similarities. The project team focused on those elements that differed from group to group.

The location and time of Design Workshop Two were kept the same as earlier meetings and reminder calls were made a day prior to the meeting. Through group discussion the participants were able to agree on similarities and debate disagreements. The primary sources of disagreement involved space utilization in the railroad right-of-way. The project team marked these preferences and the final decision and created a final design for each site.
The project team showed all three design concepts to city staff and discussed the possibilities for the design-build project.

Community members draw mural designs during Design Workshop One.

Examining full scale cutouts at a potential project site gives community members a better understanding of the area's scale and design possibilities.





During the second design workshop, community members divided into three groups, each of which produced a conceptual design for the three sites.

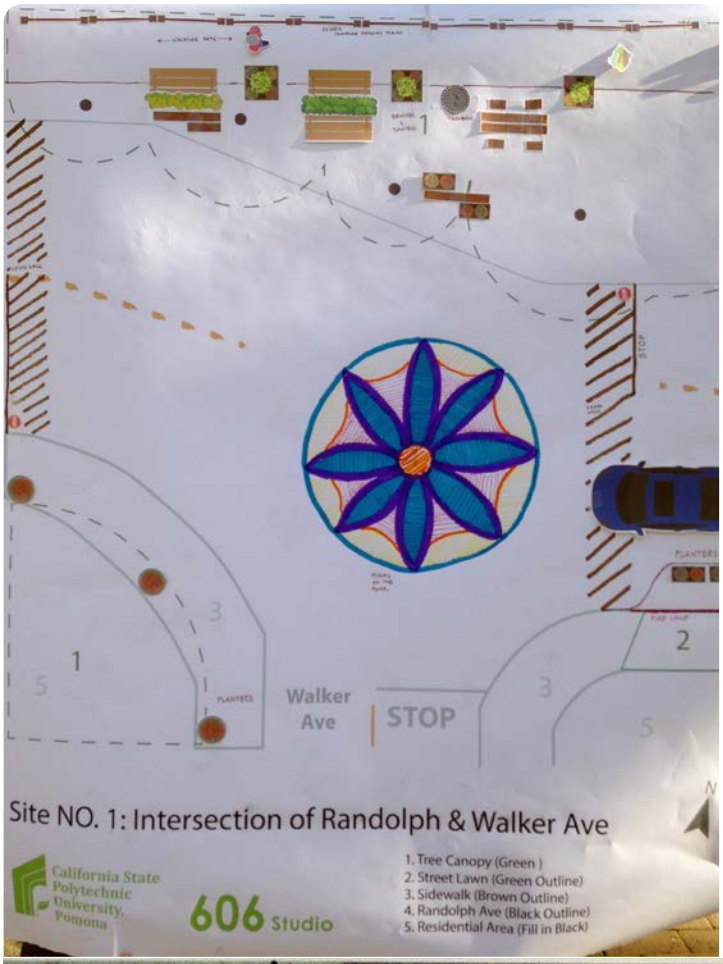
City staff responded favorably to Site One at the intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue. While the city agreed that painting a mural at the intersection was a possibility, they would not support using the railroad right-of-way or employing improved traffic elements such as stop signs and crosswalks. City staff also suggested the use of the fire lane at the intersection for the construction of a parklet.

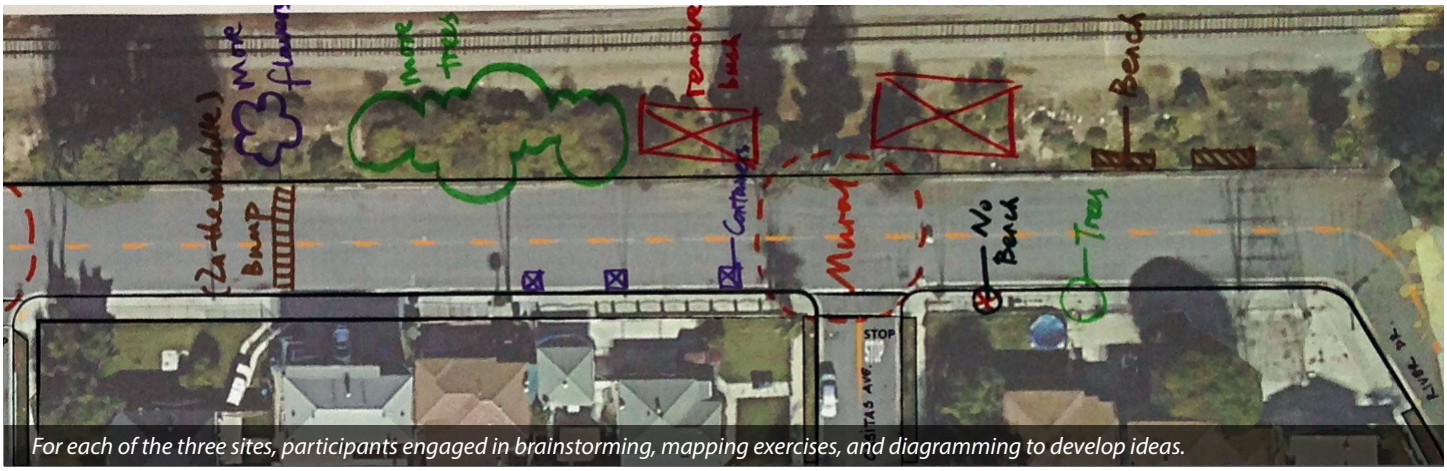
Through discussion with the community and city staff, the project team identified the river access ramp as the site of a potential long-term project. The community engagement for this phase occurred later in the form of design workshops and community meetings. Supporting local organizations will adopt the project for implementation (see Section 5.6 for additional information).

As the site location was still being determined by the city's approval process, the project team conducted a design workshop at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive to collect community input on design details so that the project team could prepare construction documents. The project team reached out to the neighbors by making phone calls three days prior to the workshop and prepared an exercise booklet consisting of diverse design details that could be used in the parklet. After walking with participants to the site, the project team employed life-sized elements such as benches and planters to demonstrate their space requirements and the potential arrangements offered by the space. Participants then marked their preferred arrangements and design elements in their exercise book (see Table 5.5).

The project team then engaged participants in an open discussion about neighborhood identity. The intent of this discussion was to identify elements that make this neighborhood distinct and can provide cultural relevance

Community members discuss the relative pros and cons of each design alternative.





For each of the three sites, participants engaged in brainstorming, mapping exercises, and diagramming to develop ideas.

to the design. The neighbors discussed cherished elements from the neighborhood which included stone fences, vibrant colors and religious statuary. The preferred plant palette included plants common to the neighborhood's residential landscape: papaya (*Carica papaya*), avocado (*Persea americana*) and plumeria (*Plumeria*). Plants with additional benefits such as low maintenance, easy of propagation, fragrant and showy flowers and edible fruits, and attracting birds, bees and butterflies were preferred by the community.

Based on the community's comments regarding the potential parklet elements as well as the community's preferred design concepts, the team prepared a detailed design for the parklet. The community members wanted to improve the railway right-of-way and create seating areas, a walkway leading to the river path, and planters. The final design for the parklet was an amalgamation of community generated concepts and information in the exercise booklets.

The project team presented the refined parklet design to city staff. This led to a series of discussions between the city and the project team in which the city repeatedly asked students to remove elements from the design, until they ultimately denied approval for the parklet altogether, citing safety and liability concerns.

The project team then switched its focus to the project the community had ranked second among potential alternatives and prepared a design aimed at improving the segment of Randolph Street between Walker Avenue and River Drive. The project team used the community concept for the site and prepared a design that featured street murals at each of the four neighborhood intersections (Walker Avenue, Home Avenue, Casitas Avenue and River Drive), gabion planters, patches of decomposed granite in existing turf areas, and play area elements such as colorful trellises and bird houses. The design used elements that

Community participants and a project team member sit on a full scale bench cutout at a design workshop.

Committee members rank program elements using the exercise booklet.

Figure 5.5 Parklet Design Elements Priority (by Votes)

Ground Cover

5	Stone
4	Brick
3	Decomposed Granite
2	Pavement
1	Turf
1	Asphalt
1	Wood
1	Paint

Configuration

5	Circular
3	Table
2	Angular
1	Picnic Table
1	L-shape
1	Opposite Facing
1	Square
0	Face-to-Face

Materials

3	Wood (Raw)
3	Wood & Painted
3	Recycled Material
3	Concrete
3	Recycled & Painted
2	Metal
0	Wood (Finished)
0	Paint

Serving Other Species

6	Bird
6	Bee
6	Butterfly
9	Plants
5	Bird Feeder
4	Bird Bath
3	Bird House

Views

6	Combination
3	Facing Railroad
2	Facing Randolph St.
0	Facing Internally

Table

4	Multi-function
4	Table
3	Picnic Table
1	Bar Table

Backrest

6	With Plants
2	No Backrest
2	Partial Backrest
1	Backrest

Play area & Artwork

3	Wood
2	Paint
2	Artwork
1	Concrete

Mural

5	Extended
5	Circular
4	Irregular Pattern
0	Regular Pattern

Other Design Elements

5	Bulletin Board
5	Pet Waste Station
0	Trash Can
5	Single Bike Rack

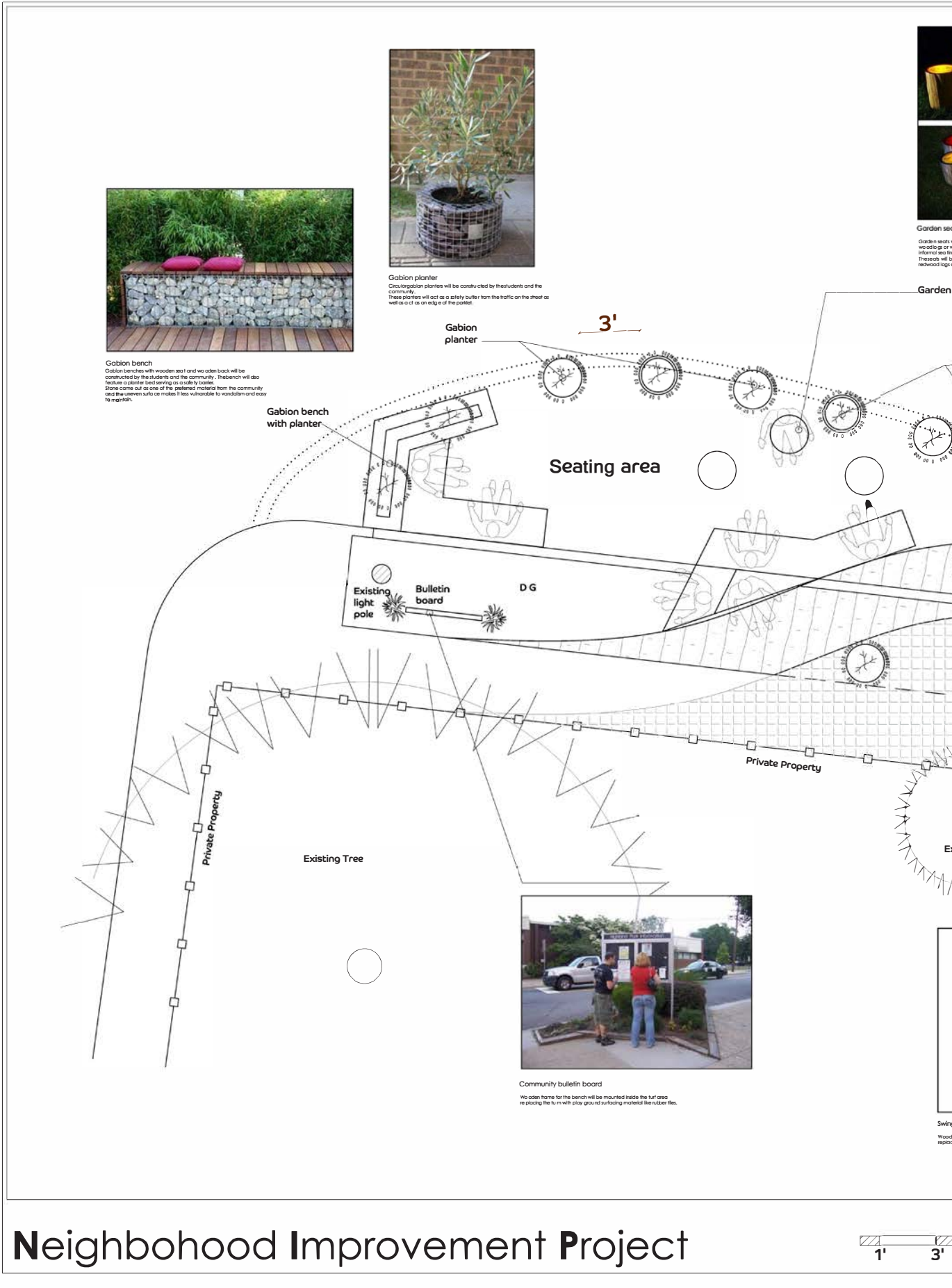
Vegetation

5	Drought Tolerant
4	Native Plants
3	Vegetable Garden
1	Ornamental Flowers

Shade

4	With Plants
4	Wood
3	Umbrella
2	PVC

Figure 5.6 Final Parklet Design



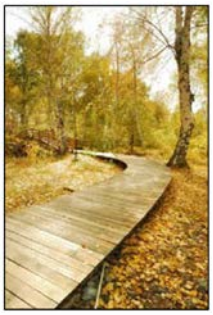
Neighbohood Improvement Project

Seat

Terracotta planter

In addition to circular gabionplanters, ready made terra cottaplanters will be usedto provide variety of colors and material to the parklet. Both type of planterswre arranged so that there is no more than 3' g ap between them.

Terracotta Planter



Walking path

The sidewalk turns into a wooden pa th providing space fo r the play are a on the sidewalk.
The wooden path will be constructed as an elevated wooden deck which will allow free water flow underneath.

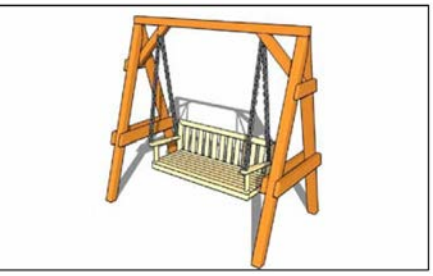
Walking Path
(Elevated Wooden Deck)

4'x6' shade/swing structure

Play area

Private Property

Existing Tree



g bench

en frame forthe bench will be mo unted inside the tuf area ding the turn wi thpl ay gound surfacing material like rubber tiles.

Street games

The tree lawn area and the additional sidewalk sp ace is used to provide a small play area for kids with p aintingstre et games on the sidewalk.

Painted sidewalk

Interlocking rubber tiles

N

5'

Cal Poly Pomona **606 Studio**

Charmy A.
Lian D.
Mona D.

were low maintenance, graffiti resistant and could not be stolen or moved from the street.

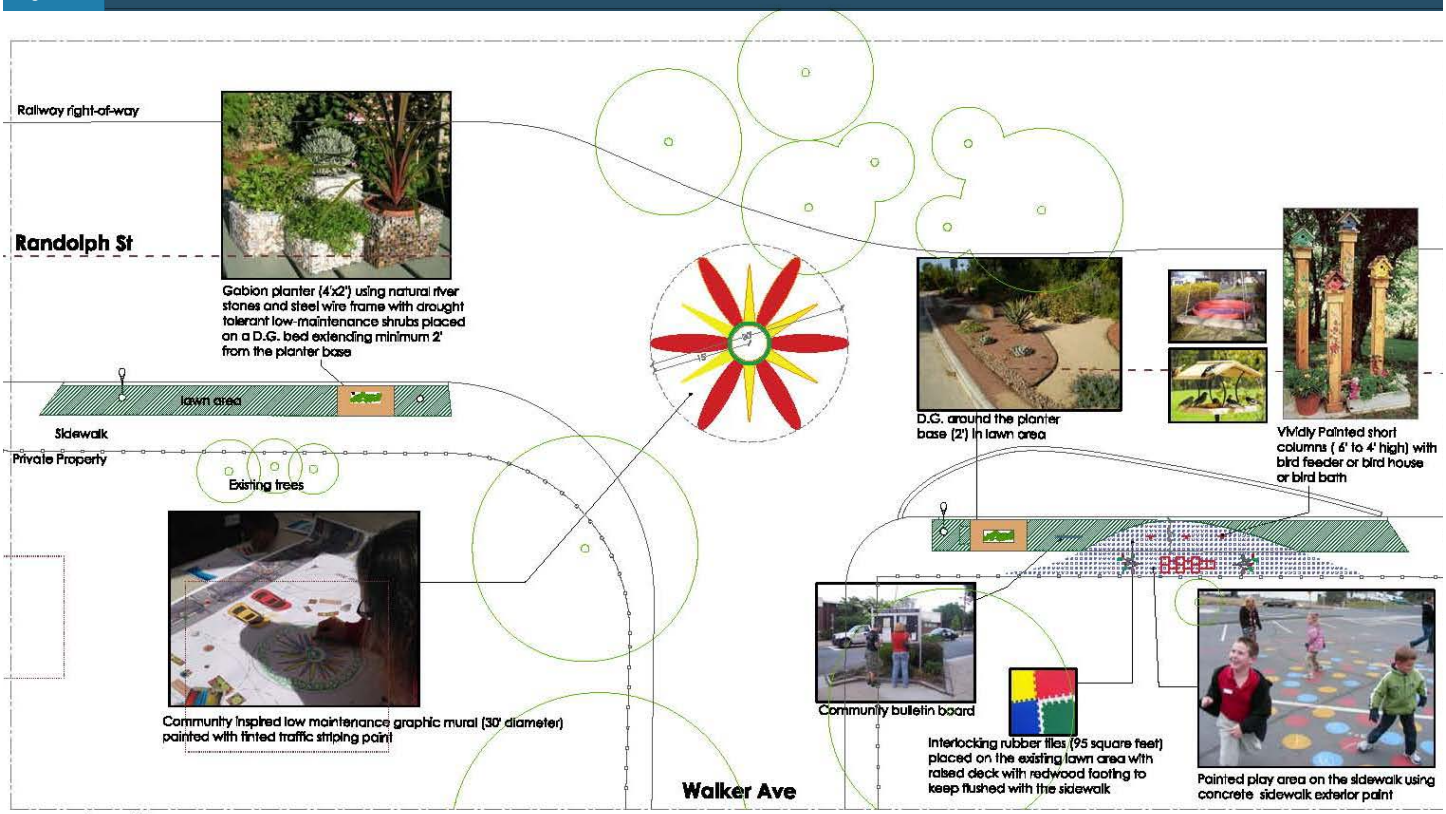
The project team presented this alternative to to city staff. Similar to the parklet, this began a dialogue with the city, with additional elements being removed in each meeting, including the swing bench, gabion planters, decomposed granite, play area elements, and community bulletin board, leaving only the mural and painted play areas.

The project team prepared the intersection mural designs based on community input. The community requested a pattern that represented nature and incorporated vibrant colors that reflected the working class Latino character of the community such as red, yellow, blue, green and orange. The project team utilized a mural design that was created by a community member during a previous design workshop. The mural pattern proposed was simple, used vibrant colors representing the community and could be painted by untrained community members. The design for the play area was taken directly from the earlier parklet design.

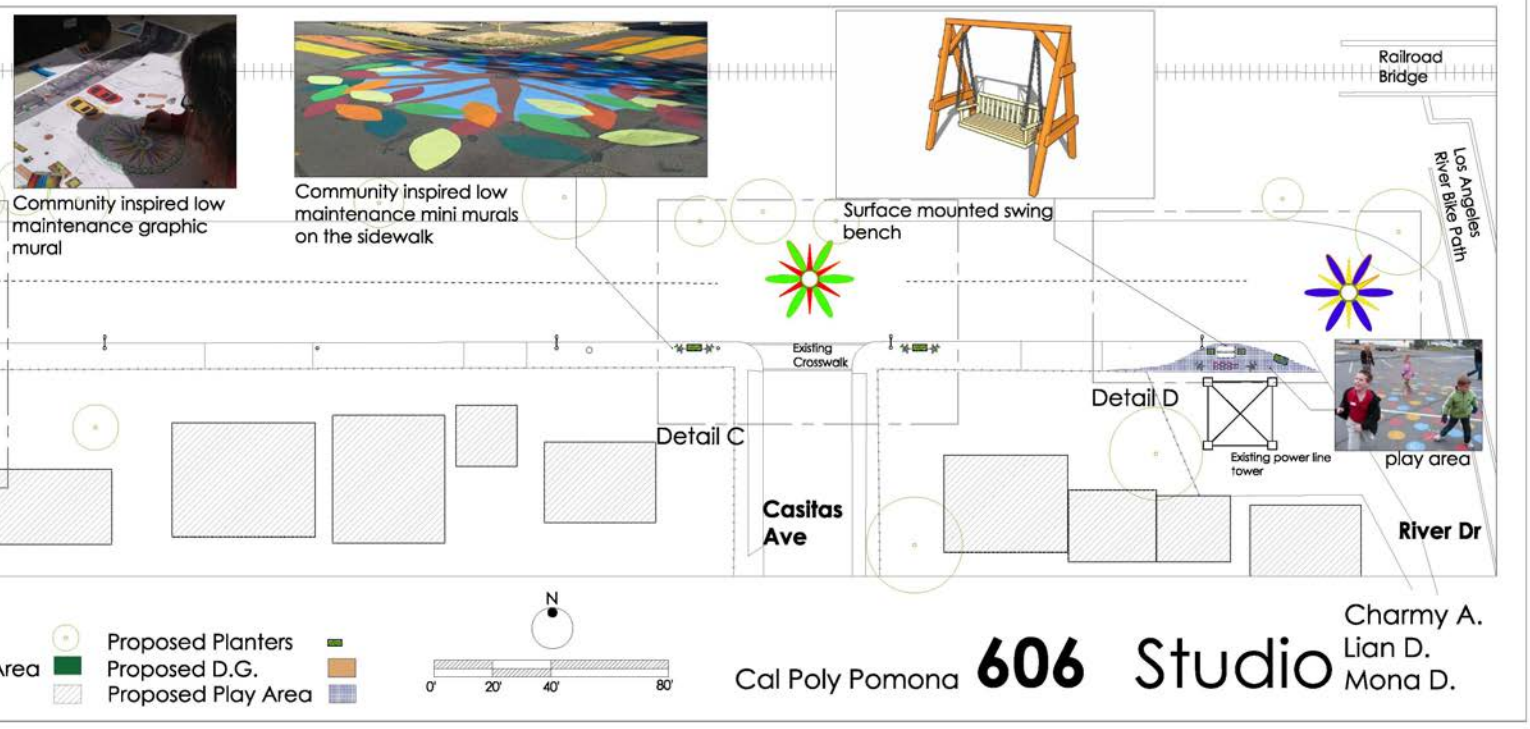
The final design of the mural was inspired by sketches done by a community member during the design workshop.

Figure 5.7 Second Design Alternative of Randolph Street Site

Figure 5.8 Second Design Alternative of Randolph Street Site: Detail A



Detail A



As the city had no budget to contribute toward traffic control, this role was performed as volunteer labor by city staff. The city thus added the stipulation that all construction would have to be completed within two work days.

City staff worked with the project team to create a detailed work schedule for mural painting. It was agreed that all work would be completed during two Saturdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. including one hour to allow paint to dry.

The project team worked with city staff to prepare detailed specifications and to accommodate the city's requirements. For example, in order to ensure that streets would be closed for the shortest time possible, the city required the project team use a fast-drying paint. Additionally, the project team was required to purchase special event insurance. With these last hurdles cleared, the team was ready to begin building the design.

Figure 5.9 Final Approved Design

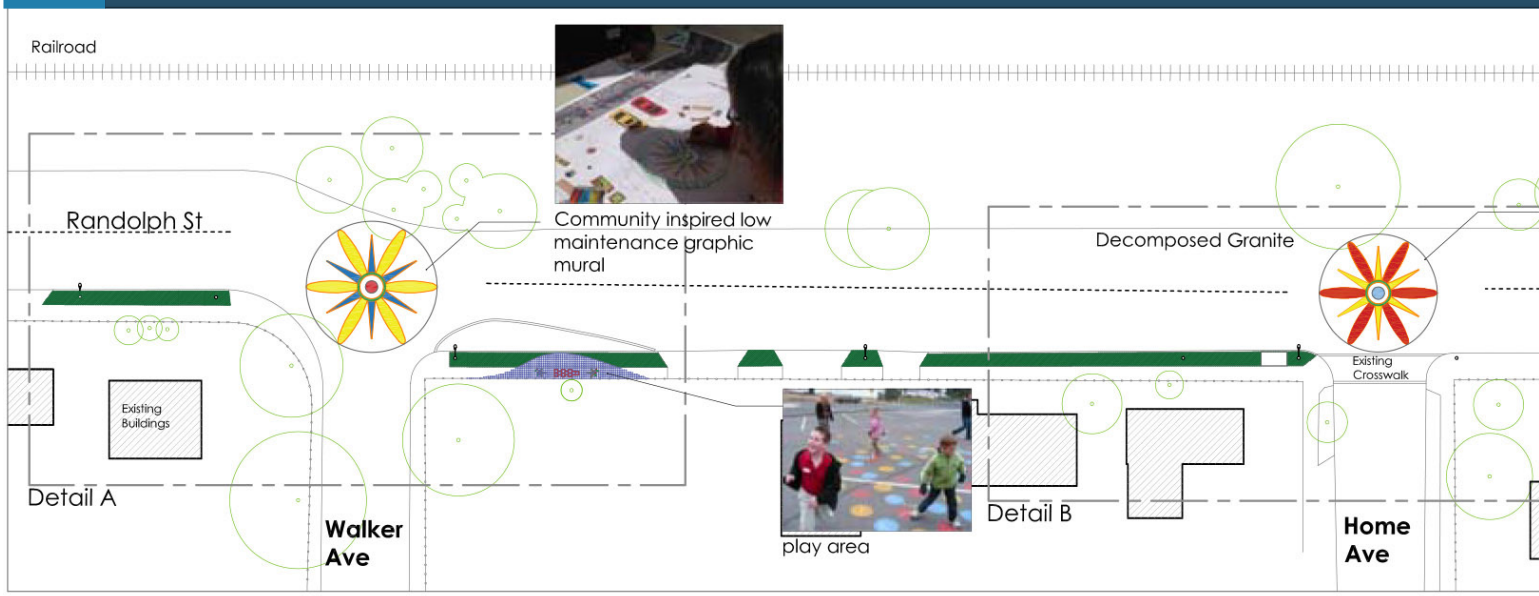
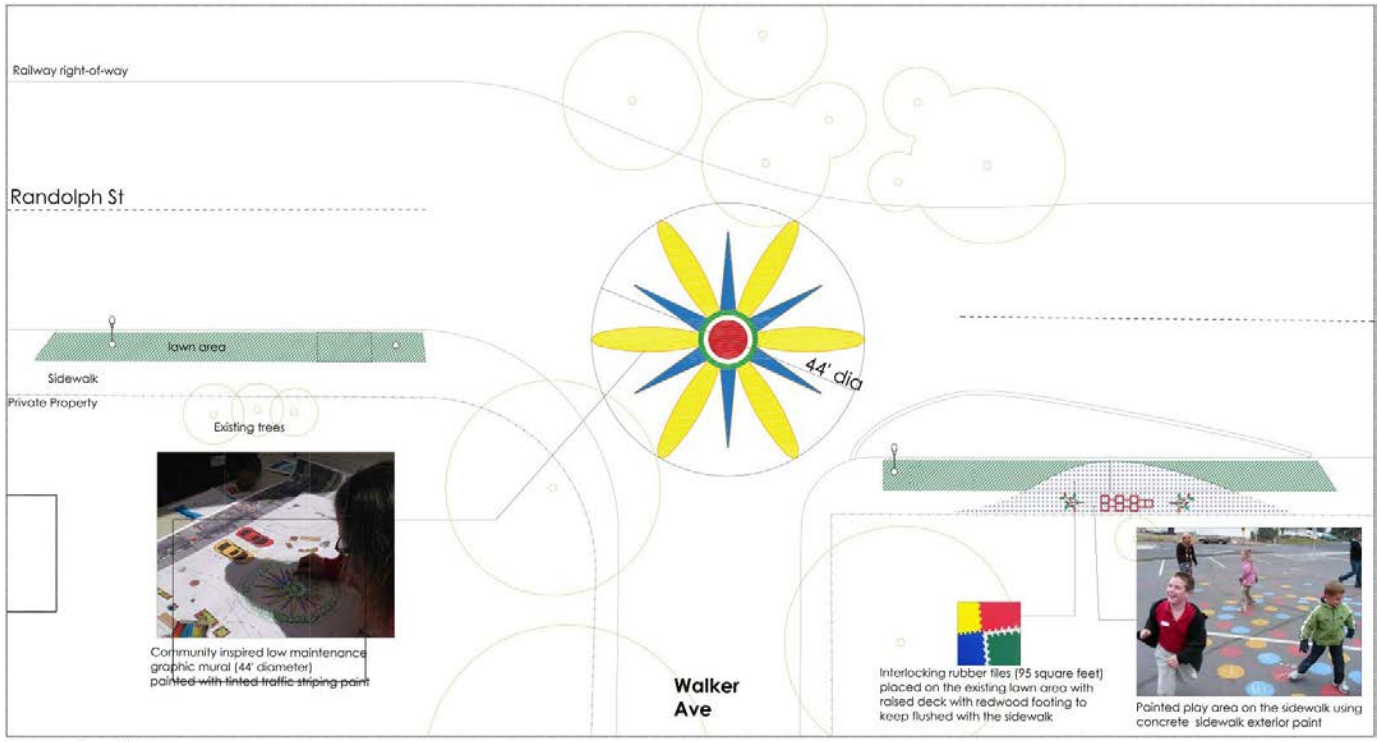
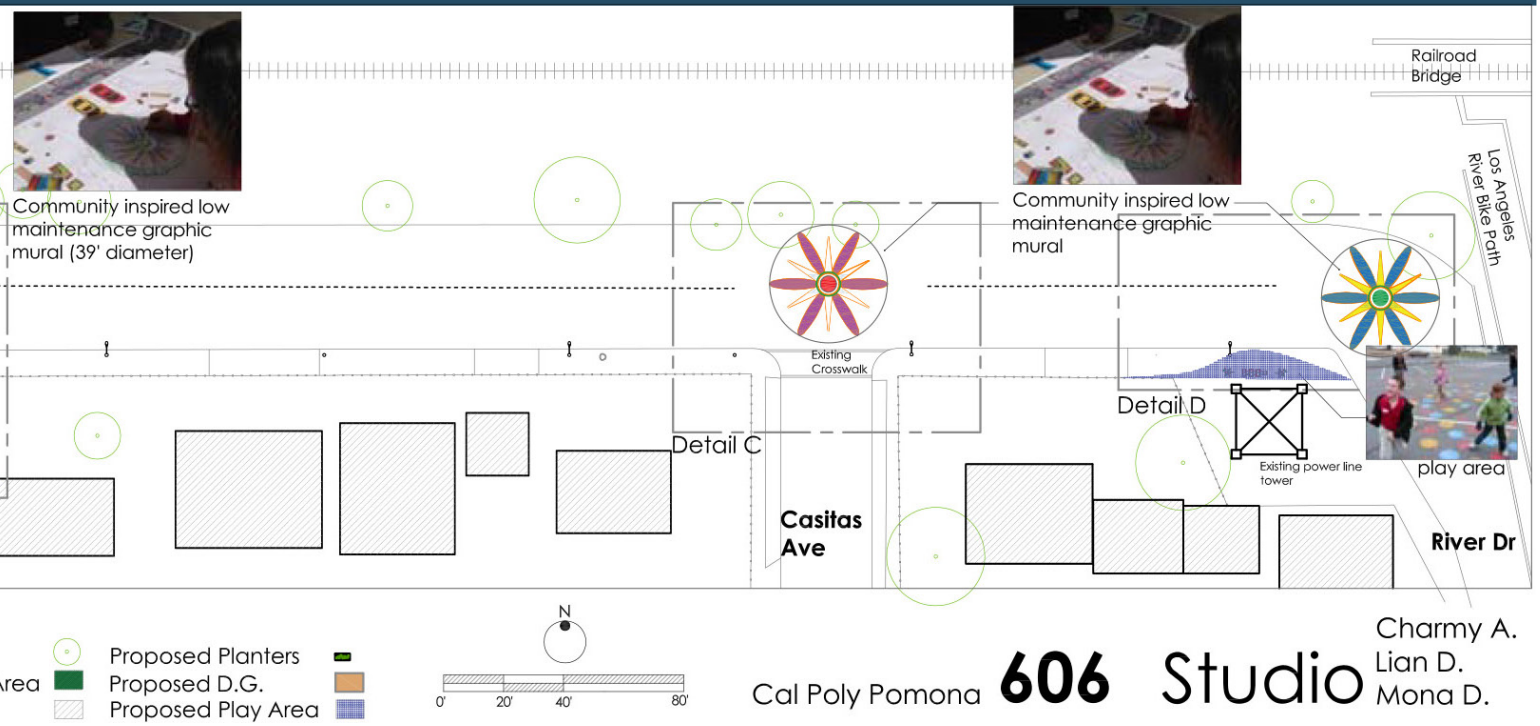


Figure 5.10 Final Approved Design: Detail A



Detail A



The design phase culminated with the design of the murals at the intersections of Randolph Street with Walker, Home, and Casitas Avenues, and River Drive. These murals perform the function of traffic calming by drawing attention to the intersections with bright and colorful floral designs. With consistent and enthusiastic community support from all ages, the four murals were successfully completed over the course of three Saturdays. However, the painted play area from the approved design could not get built due to time restrictions.

Site Preparation

On the first work day ten residents joined the project team to prepare the site to be painted. They swept the ground clean of debris while city staff used blowers to clear away excess dirt. The design was sketched onto the pavement using a stencil, chalk, and spray-paint. A local artist and steering committee member helped the project team with this process. Each section within the outline was sprayed with the color to be eventually filled in so when participants arrived, they could continue filling in the spaces with color. On the second work day, the project team set up four different painting stations so that more areas could be covered by participants.

The City of Bell required the team have all volunteers sign a Hold Harmless form for the City of Bell and a Release of Liability form for Cal Poly Pomona. The city staff provided a safety vest and a color coded bracelet for each of the participants and the project team.

City staff provided color coded bracelets for the community and the project team.

Community members take a break in the shade during a busy work day.

City staff help to block Randolph Street while community members prepare the site to be painted.

Mural Painting

Painting the murals turned out to be a fun activity for the community members, city staff, and project team. Throughout the day more people joined the effort including children and teenagers who passed by and decided to take part.

The community worked together to fill in the outline of the flower. As the interior paint dried, the more confident community members began outlining the pattern.

To allow traffic to continue to flow around the project site, the painting activity was phased to close only a single lane at a time. On each day, city staff closed a portion of Randolph Street to traffic until 3:30 p.m. to allow the paint to dry.

On the second work day, the project team and ten residents finished the touch up work at the River Drive and Casitas Avenue intersections. However, the team was not able to complete the work at the Home Avenue and the Walker Avenue intersections.

The project team distributed the participants at the four sites with three to four participants per mural at the new sites and two participants per mural at the previous sites. To save time and work efficiently, the project team pre-mixed the paint a day in advance. The participants started painting the first half of the mural inside the closed lane and switched sides once the paint was dry.

Traffic paint was only available in limited colors so the project team needed to mix it themselves.

City staff help the community by directing traffic and keeping the painters safe.

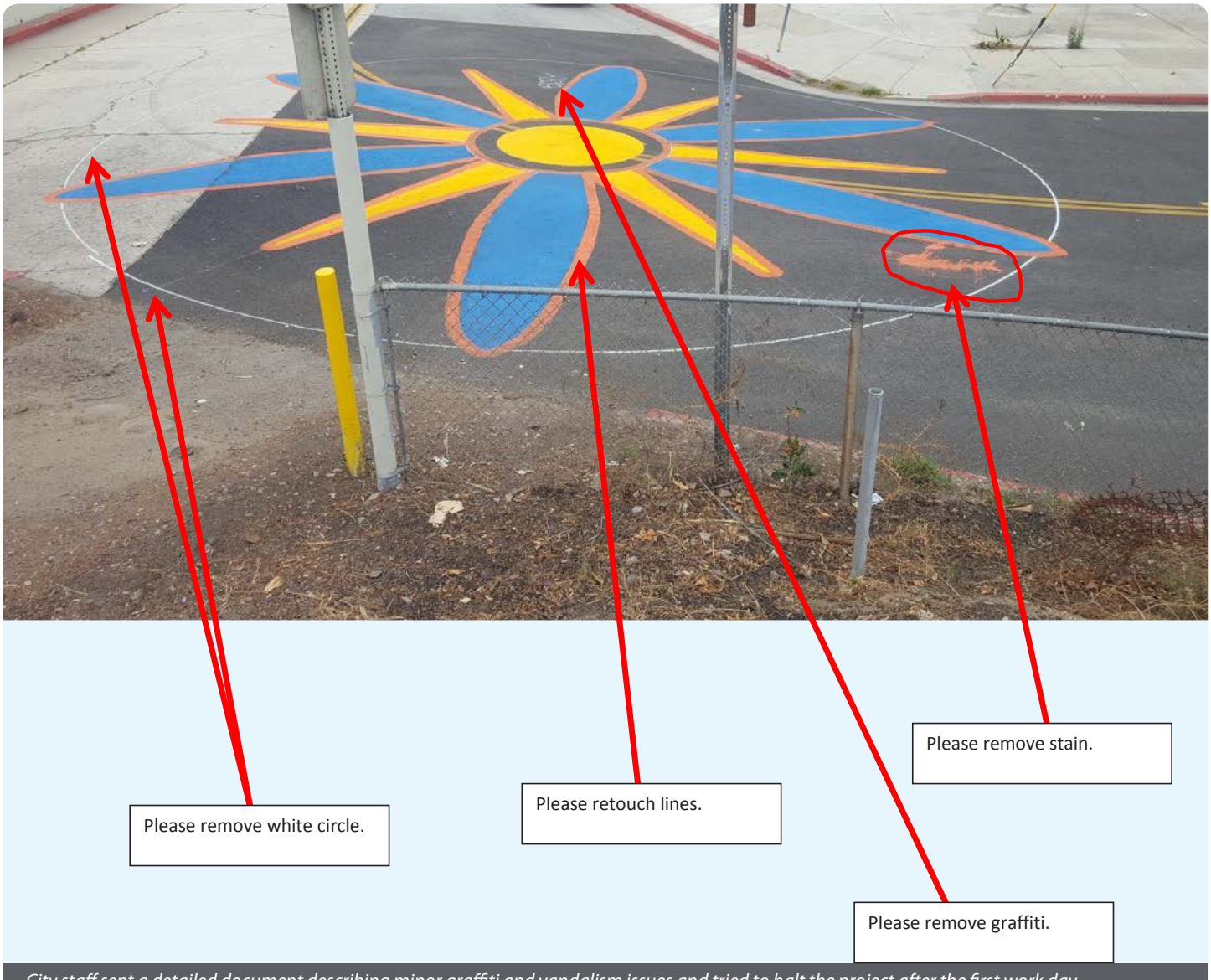
The project team and community paint the site.

Final Details

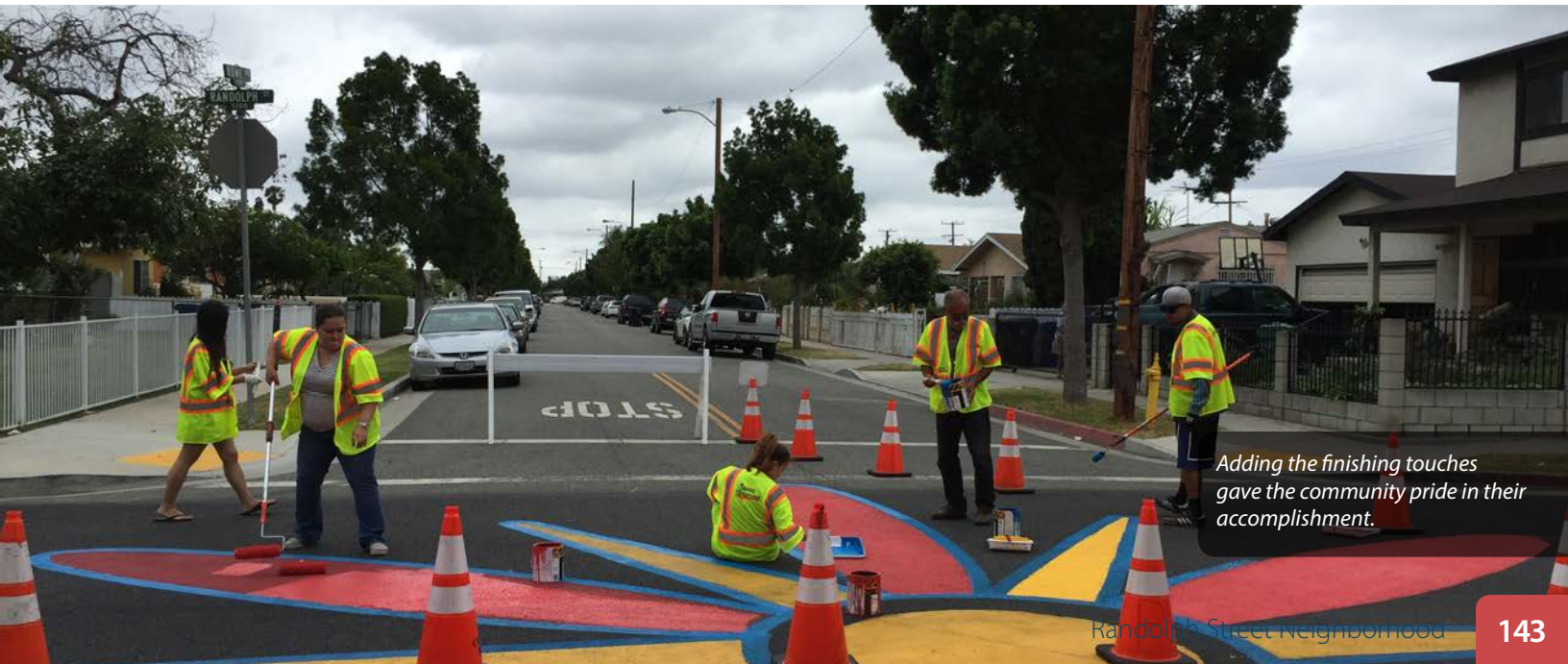
Soon after the first two murals were painted, the project team was asked to stop the project. The murals were tagged with graffiti and city staff was afraid that this type of work would encourage vandalism around the area.

Active members of the community met with city staff and were able to convince them that the project should continue because of community support. Following the meeting with the city, community members set out to complete the final details, which included finishing touches on each of the four murals, cleaning up graffiti, painting over motorcycle tire tracks, and cleaning up paint spills. Eager to demonstrate to the city that this was a worthwhile project, community members and the project team did a thorough clean up and were able to celebrate a job well done with tacos and refreshments.

Finally, two weeks later, the project team and the community were able to do the remaining painting work and the final touch up. The project team performed the same site preparation and set up procedures as earlier work days. As the project came to a close and final details were taken care of, the project team celebrated their success with the community with another shared meal.

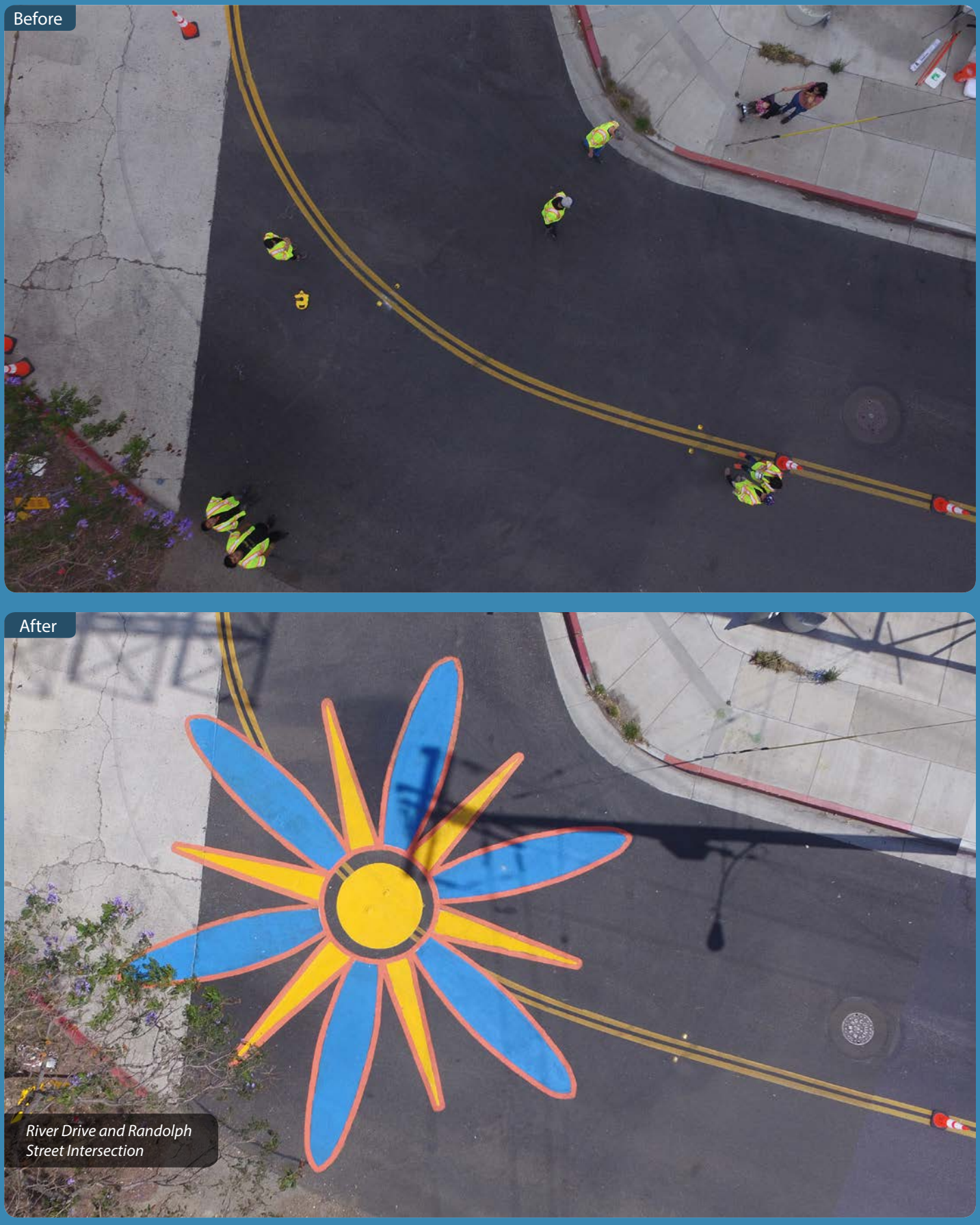


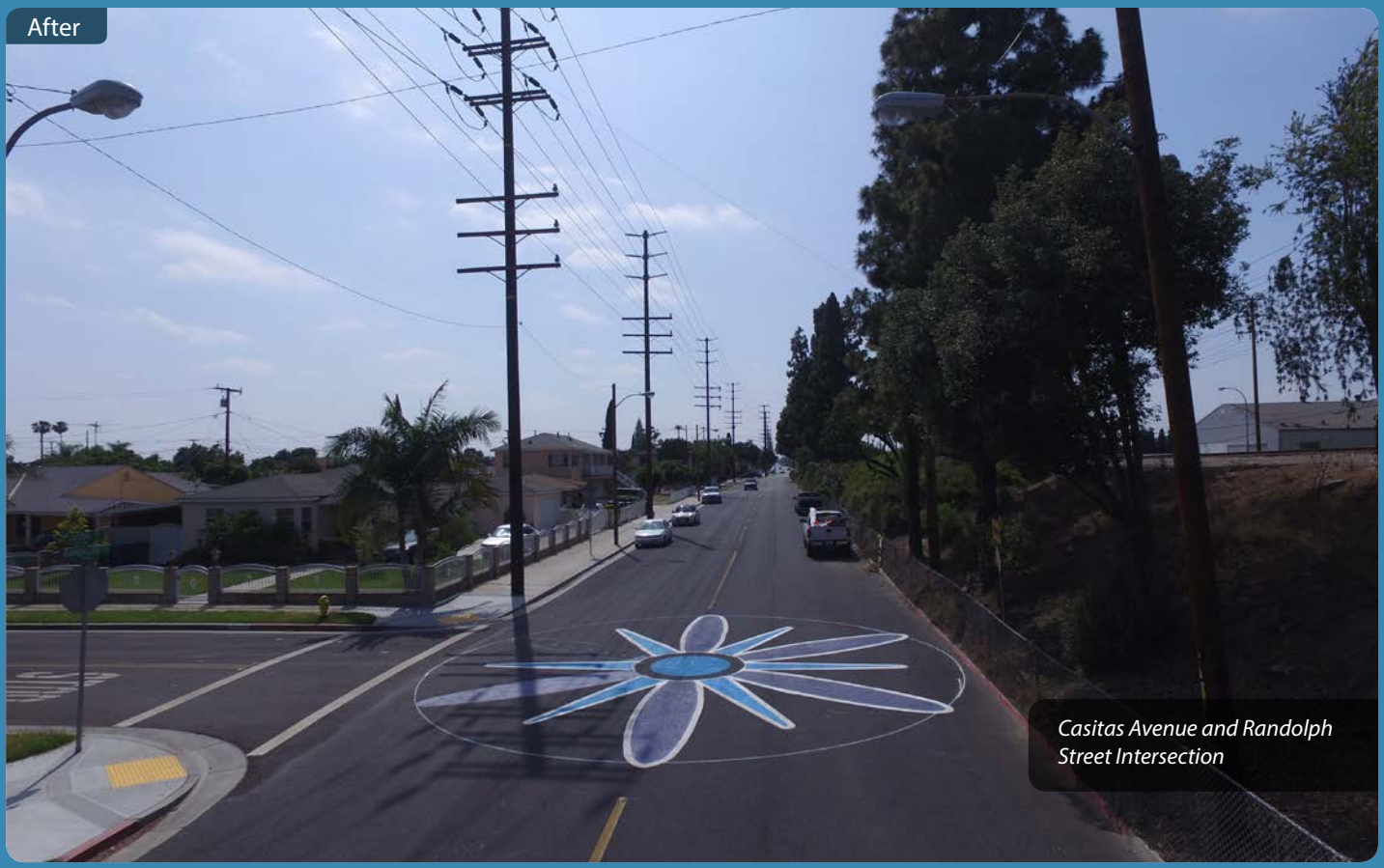
City staff sent a detailed document describing minor graffiti and vandalism issues and tried to halt the project after the first work day.



Adding the finishing touches gave the community pride in their accomplishment.

Figure 5.11 Intersection Murals: Before and After





Casitas Avenue and Randolph Street Intersection

Figure 5.11 Intersection Murals: Before and After

Before

After

Walker Avenue and Randolph Street Intersection

FUTURE PLANS FOR BELL DEL RÍO

5.6

While the built project addressed the neighborhood's short-term needs for traffic calming, a larger project is needed to bring more fundamental and positive change to the environmental and social setting of Bell del Río.

The project team's long-term project further addresses the community's need for enhanced environmental quality and multi-functional open space as well as provides passive recreation opportunities via the neighborhood's access point to the Los Angeles River. In order to address these needs, the Riverside Mini-Park is proposed at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive in the City of Bell.

Partner Organization: North East Trees

In search of a partner organization for the Riverside Mini-Park, the project team reached out to North East Trees (NET), an environmental non-profit organization. The mission of NET is "to restore nature's services in resource challenged communities, through a collaborative resource development, implementation, and stewardship process" (NET, 2016).

NET was the first design-build non-profit organization in Los Angeles. The majority of the group's projects are built along the Los Angeles River and focus on urban forestry, park design and construction, watershed rehabilitation, youth environmental stewardship, and community stewardship. Their funding derives from multiple organizations including local, state, and federal governmental agencies, foundations, corporations, private entities, and individuals.

In the past 25 years, NET has completed over 35 parks, mini parks, and trails projects. Many of the group's projects along the Los Angeles River share similarities with the Riverside Mini-Park, such as Cudahy River Park, Maywood Park and bicycle access point, Steelhead Park and Oso Park.

NET was first introduced to the project while visiting a project work day after being informed of the project by the team's instructor. On May 24, 2016, the project team held their first meeting with NET to introduce the project and

North East Trees' river access improvement project in Maywood is located in close proximity to the proposed long-term project (NET, 2016).

discuss the design concept. During a follow-up meeting, the project team presented information about the nature and scope of current work and discussed the long-term project in detail.

Long-Term Design Workshop

On April 23, 2016, the project team conducted a workshop to facilitate community involvement in the long-term project. During the meeting, the community was reintroduced to the river access point, a site that was chosen by the community as a potential project location during the earlier design-build phase.

The project team provided a booklet containing sample design elements in which participants were asked to mark their preferred features. These included photos of design elements such as wheelchair access ramps, bollards, terraces, tree houses, gates, decks, bird houses, shade structures, water fountains, pet waste stations, lighting, trash cans, exercise equipment, educational boards, tables, and chairs. Participants were also asked their preferred arrangements and orientation of tables and benches (see Appendix B.18).

The community members expressed interest in:

- ADA access
- Bollards to define the project site
- Terraces
- A tree house for kids
- A deck around the existing tree on the site
- Facilities for wildlife
- Shade structures with seating for pedestrians and cyclists
- Water fountains for both humans and pets
- Lighting for the seating area
- A pet waste station
- Trash cans near the seating area
- Exercise equipment
- Interpretive signs about the Los Angeles River and wildlife habitat
- Seating areas in different locations on the site

At the end of the first workshop, participants engaged in a site clean-up. This inspired and motivated residents to continue to make improvements to the site.

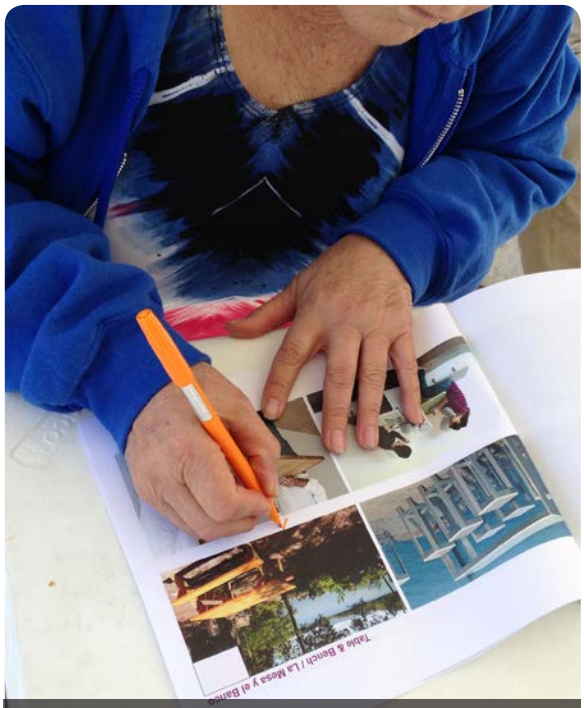
Community members have an open discussion and look out at the river from atop the access point.

Conceptual Plan

This 4000 square foot site is located at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive and serves as the connection between the Bell del Río neighborhood and the Los Angeles River. The site has an approximately thirty-degree slope rising from the corner of Randolph Street and River Drive to the connection point at the railroad right-of-way and the railway bridge, which defines the northern boundary of the project site. A large Jacaranda tree (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) is found on the eastern side of the site. The Los Angeles River Path sits behind a seven-foot levee wall, which has well-fenced dense bushes on the top, defining the eastern boundary of the project site.

Objectives

- Address the Bell del Río neighborhood's desires for enhanced environmental amenities.
- Create a multi-functional space at the



Community members mark their preferred design elements for the long-term design project.

The project team cleans up the river access point after the long-term design workshop, increasing community motivation for the project.

Los Angeles River access point to provide passive recreation opportunities.

- Provide an outdoor socializing and entertainment space with seating for Bell del Río residents.
- Provide recreational linkages between Bell del Río and the Los Angeles River.
- Improve the existing landscaping conditions of the project site.
- Provide exercise facilities for youth and adults.
- Provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities for the Los Angeles River Bike Path users and Bell del Río residents.
- Provide habitat for wildlife and birds.

Constraints:

- The site is steep.
- The site is perceived as unsafe because of crimes and assault.
- The site is controlled by multiple agencies such as the City of Bell, Union Pacific Railroad and U.S. Army Cops of Engineers.

Opportunities:

- Important river access point for the local community.
- Views of the Los Angeles River.
- The existing prospering Jacaranda tree (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) provides shade.
- There is a direct connection to the Los Angeles River Bike Path.

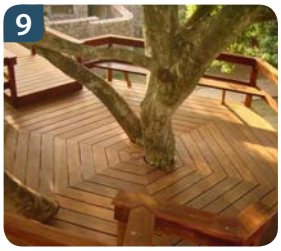
The river access point at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive is poorly maintained.

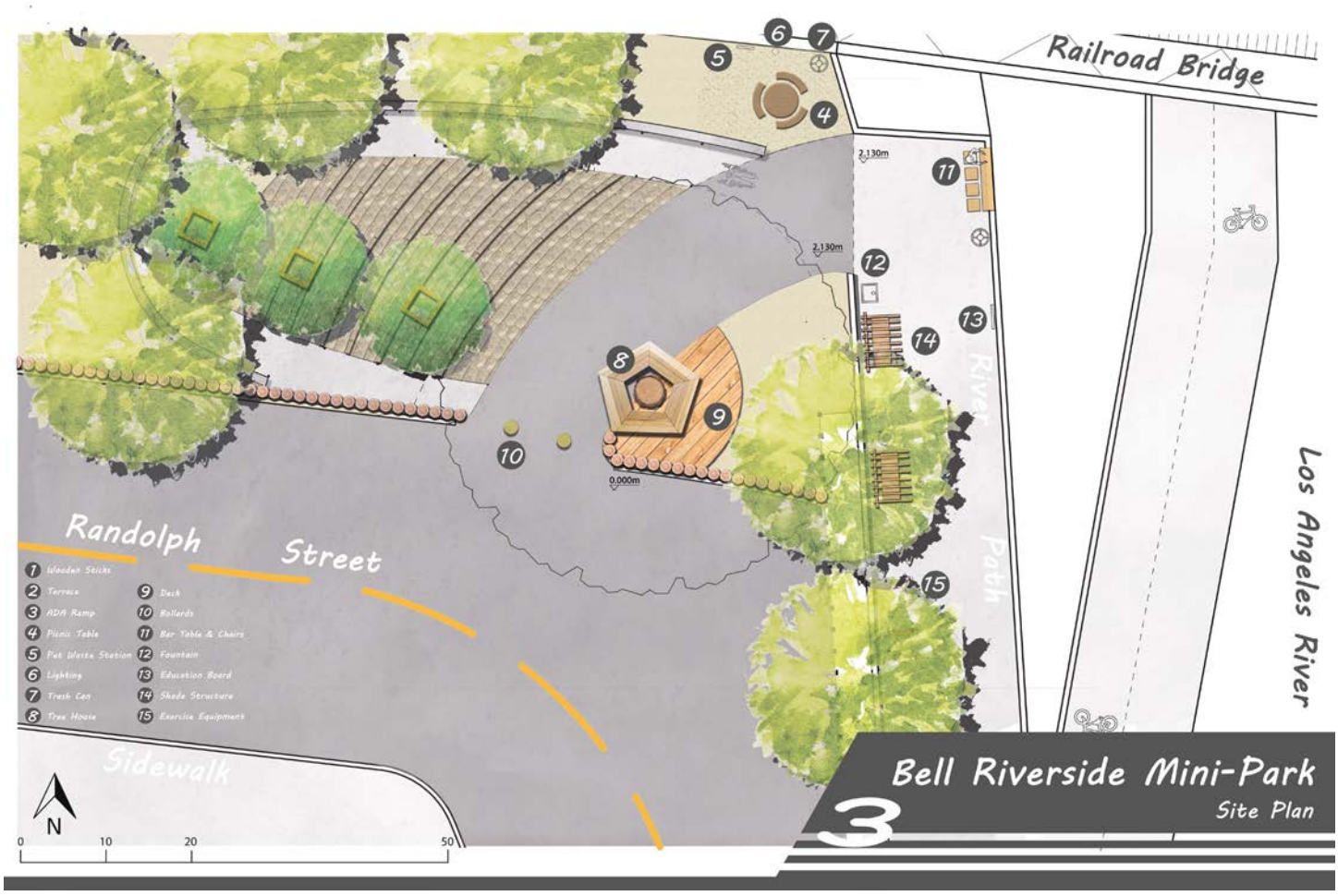
Design Concept

The Bell Riverside Mini-Park utilizes the site's unique topography to create an outdoor gathering, entertainment, and socializing space. The plan proposes an ADA ramp on the western side of the site and a children's play area around the existing Jacaranda tree. Bar-style tables and chairs face the Los Angeles River to take advantage of the river views. Benches with shade structures, exercise equipment and educational signs provide educational opportunities and passive recreational facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. The proposal focuses on increasing accessibility, seating, and play areas by using a variety of materials and design elements (see Figure 5.12).

Long-term project partner organization North East Trees discusses community needs with the community members.

Figure 5.12 Bell Riverside Mini-Park Design Concept



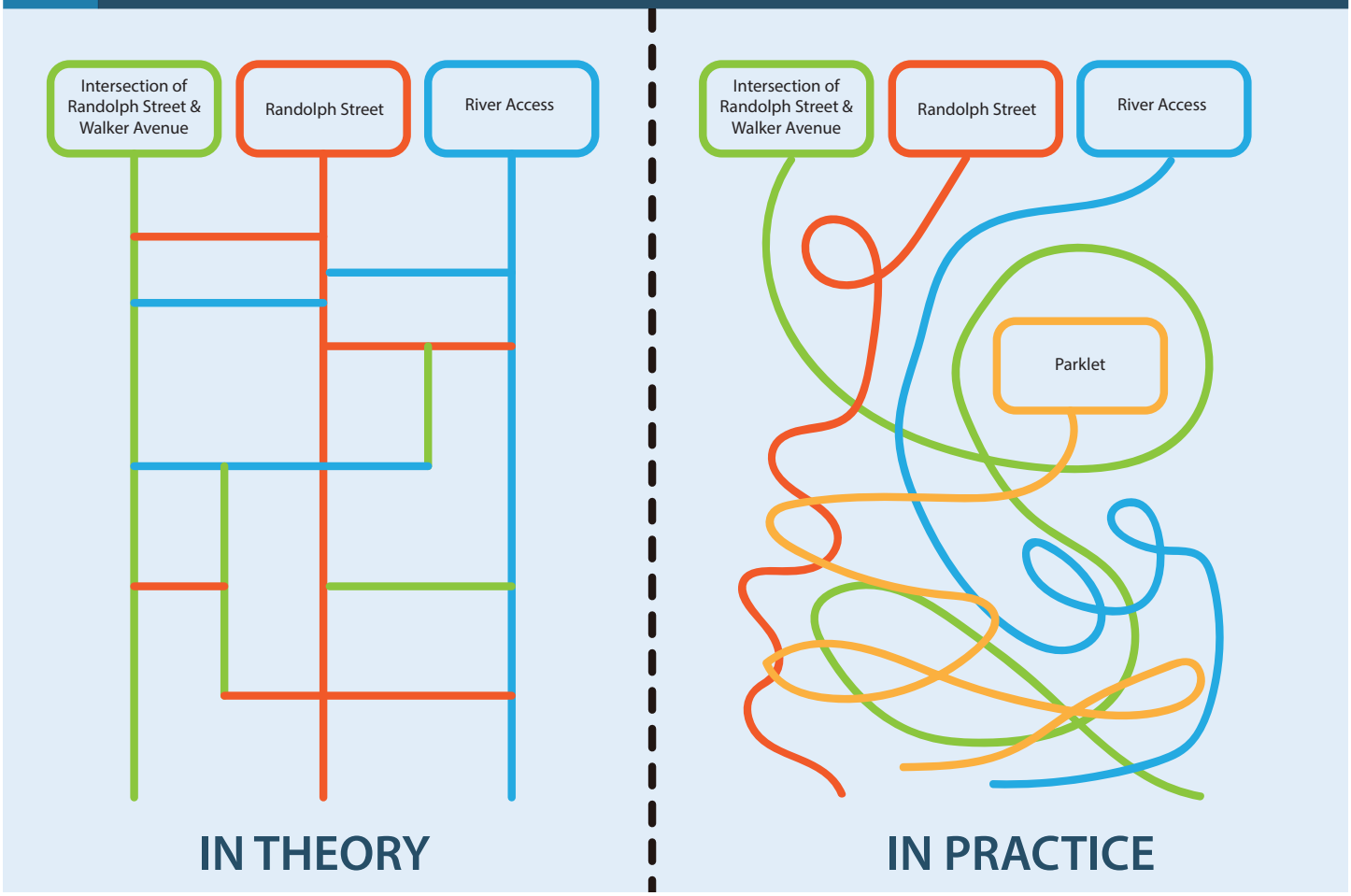


5.7

The biggest challenge for the project team was working with the City of Bell. The city officials who worked with the team often provided misleading and contradictory information that delayed the project. At times the city offered suggestions, and indicated support and approval for projects. Later, the same officials would revoke their approval and support and require the team to modify their designs or threaten to cancel the project entirely. In one instance, the city asked the team to stop the murals midway through the project. It was only through the support and enthusiasm of the steering committee members who went to city hall to demand the project be completed, that the city ultimately cooperated. Regardless of the challenges, the project team was grateful for city staff who provided help and support through the difficult process and made it possible for the completion of the murals.

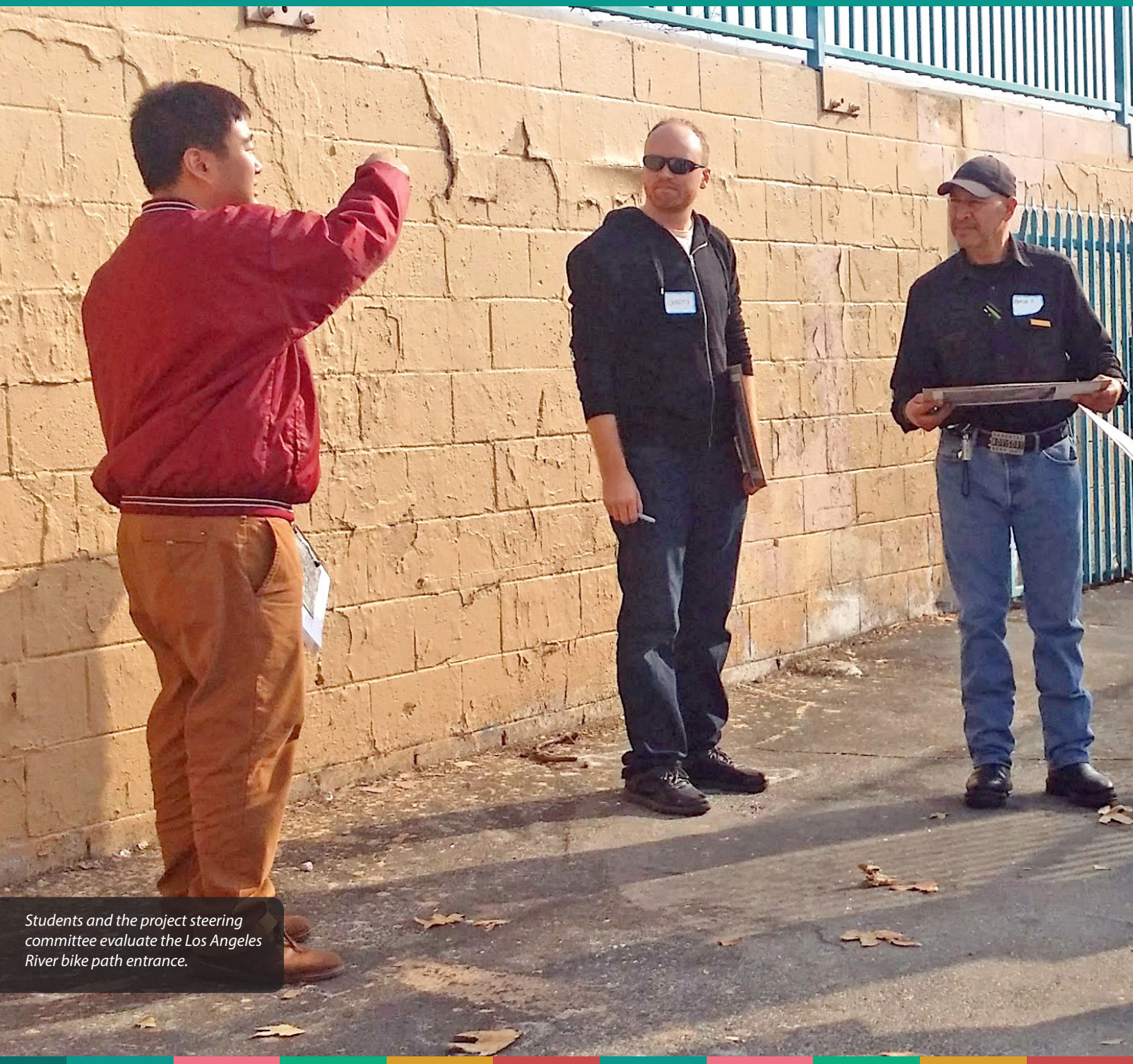
Initially, the team was supported by the city, but struggled to engage community interest. Over time the city became a road block, while community support increased and became more passionate. During the project, the team saw a change in the neighborhood. People become inspired and excited, believing strongly that they could shape their community for the better. The community of Bell del Río has created the first approved public street murals in Southern California. It will be exciting to see what is next for this community.

Figure 5.13 Working with Local Government



LA SANTANA NEIGHBORHOOD

CITY OF CUDAHY, CALIFORNIA



Students and the project steering committee evaluate the Los Angeles River bike path entrance.

Downtown
Los Angeles
LA River
Cudahy

WHERE IS LA SANTANA?

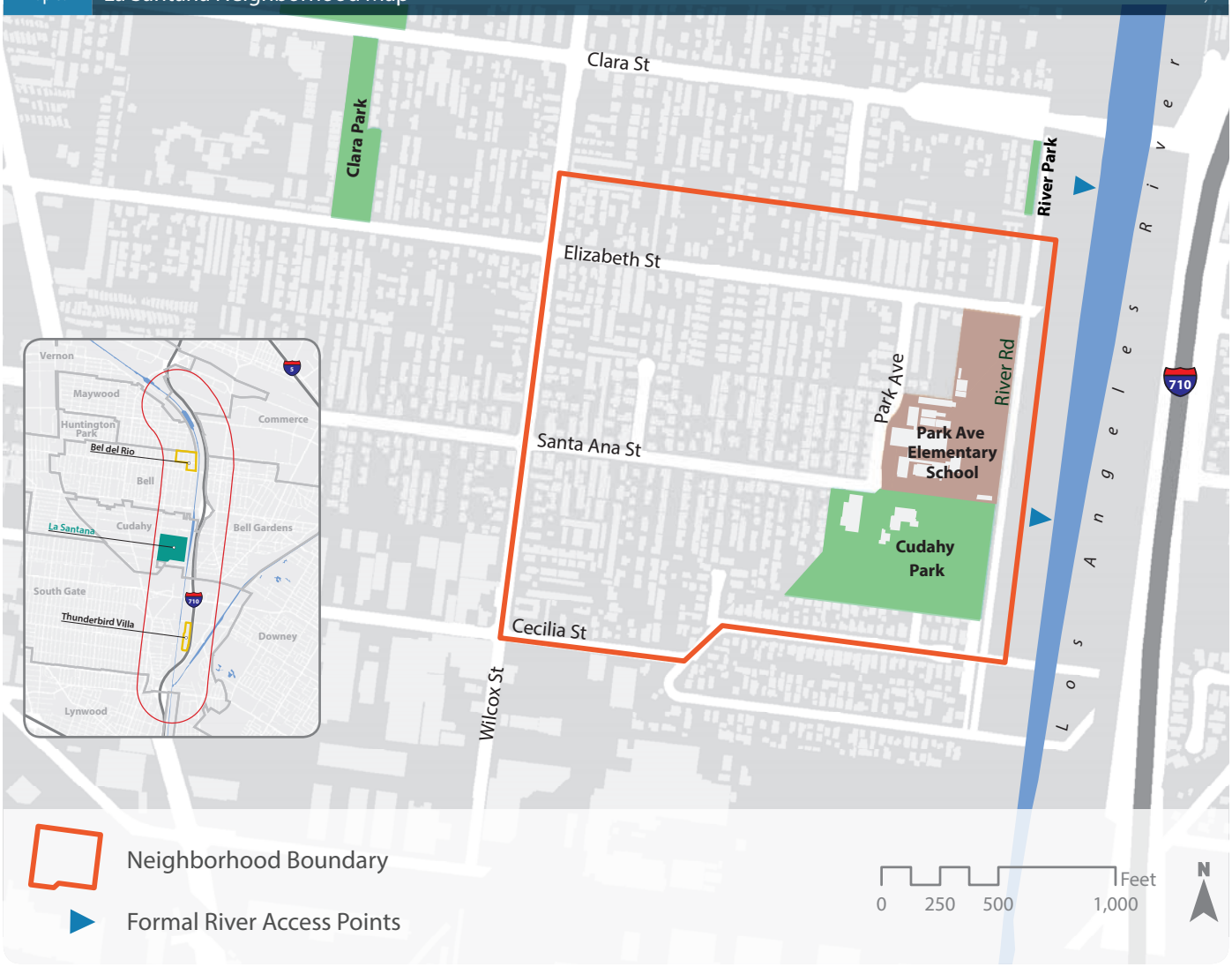
6.1

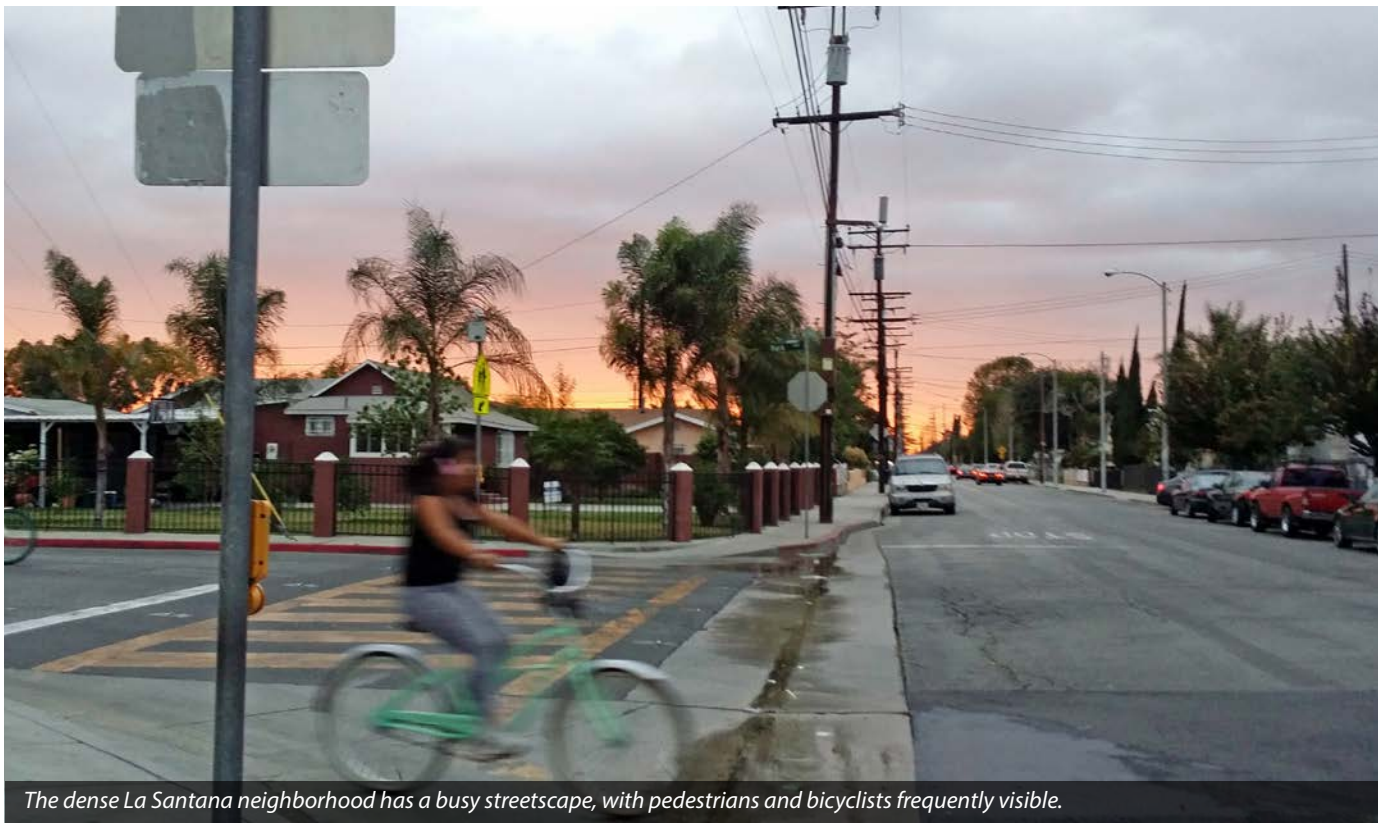
This project neighborhood is situated in Cudahy, California, a small but densely populated city located in central Los Angeles County south of downtown. Cudahy borders the Los Angeles River on the city's eastern edge. Its other borders are defined by Salt Lake Avenue to the east, Patata Street to the south, and a northern border that generally follows Florence Avenue. Cudahy borders the cities of Bell, Bell Gardens, South Gate, and Huntington Park.

The project neighborhood's boundaries are defined by the Los Angeles River to the east, Wilcox Avenue to the west, Cecilia Street to the south, and Elizabeth Street to the north. Known locally as "La Santana", the neighborhood sits on the eastern edge of the city. Urban form in the neighborhood is largely characterized by long rows of apartments extending roughly 400 feet from Santa Ana Street and Elizabeth Street, creating sub-communities inside the larger neighborhood. The Los Angeles River is accessible via two ramps located along River Road, one of which sits behind Cudahy Park, and the second of which sits slightly to the north of the neighborhood across River Road from Cudahy River Park.

Map 6.1 La Santana Neighborhood Map

Data source: LA County





The dense La Santana neighborhood has a busy streetscape, with pedestrians and bicyclists frequently visible.

APPLICATION OF METHODS

6.2

Introduction

The project team identified questions which guided the selection and use of the following methods throughout the course of the project: GIS, data mining, field observations, interviews, canvassing, steering committee meetings, community meetings, site selection walks, design workshops and work days. The team used those methods to answer the following questions:

- Who lives here?
- What are the immediate needs of the residents in terms of improving quality of life?
- What are the improvements that can be made in the neighborhood?
- What are the best locations for the project?
- What design interventions would be best for the site?

(see Table 6.1 & Table 6.2).

GIS

GIS was employed by the project team to map spatially determined issues and factors relevant to the community. This was done through an approach that combined participatory mapping exercises carried out during community meetings and GIS technology. The results include maps of perceived unsafe locations within the neighborhood, community members' favorite locations, and the neighborhood's common walking routes. An analysis of park service within the community was also performed by calculating the acreage of parks within a quarter mile of the neighborhood, making a calculation of the population each park could serve based on various standards, and marking the households which could thus be considered to be serviced by each park based on population density figures from 2010 census block data (see Section 6.3: Inventory Results for details).

Data Mining

The project team used data mining to determine the cultural, environmental, and social characteristics of the region and neighborhood (see Section 1.4).

Field Observations

To understand the cultural, environmental, and social context of the region and neighborhood, the project team used field observations to gather information (see Section 1.4).

Students discuss the project with the organization From Lot to Spot, which had recently worked with the community in Cudahy.

Table 6.1 Application of Methods

Method	Phase	Who Was Involved?	Participatory Techniques
GIS	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Project Team	N/A
Data Mining	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Project Team	N/A
Field Observations	• Organization Building • Site Selection • Program • Design	• Project Team	N/A
Interviews	• Organization Building	• Project Team • Outside Organizations	• Open Discussion
Canvassing	• Organization Building	• Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion
Steering Committee Meetings	• Organization Building • Site Selection • Program • Design	• Steering Committee • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Comparative Exercise • Committee Training • Ranking
Community Meetings	• Site Selection • Program	• Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Brainstorm
Site Selection Walks	• Site Selection	• Steering Committee • Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Mapping • Comparative Exercise • Committee Training
Design Workshops	• Design	• Steering Committee • Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Mapping • Prototyping • Site Design
Work Days	• Build	• Steering Committee • Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion

Interviews

The project team used interviews to gather information about the project neighborhood and its relationship to Cudahy, the Los Angeles River, and the broader region (see Section 1.4). In the first months of the project, beginning in October 2015, the project team interviewed people from several organizations, both private and public. The individuals had knowledge of past and current local and regional projects and participatory design in the study area. They were selected to inform the group's understanding of the following questions:

- What projects are currently happening in the community?
- Are there projects which focus on participatory design?
- What are strategies to involve the community with participatory design?
- Are there broader, regional projects which could impact Cudahy?

These interviews involved the following people: Joseph Gonzalez and Jonathan Perisho from the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA), Hugo Lujan from East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ), Maria de Leon from From Lot To Spot (FLTS), Lacey Withers from Withers & Sandgren Landscape Architecture and Planning, and two Cudahy city staff, Michael Allen who is the head of Cudahy Department of Community Development, and Victor Santiago of the Parks and Recreation Commission (see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Table 6.2 Project Methods Logic

Big Question	Sub Questions	Methods	Results	Implications
Who lives here?	How does this neighborhood compare to the broader region? What are the demographics, income, and level of education? What is the social and political outlook of this community? What are the unique characteristics of the community?	• GIS • Data Mining • Canvassing • Interviews • Field Observation	• Young community • Majority working class Latino • Distrust of local government • Politically fragmented • Politically and socially active	• Design should address youth • Cultural considerations for design details (color, palette, planting, etc.) • Team must be careful about involving the local city government, due to mistrust • Process must involve people from both sides of political divide
What are the immediate needs of the residents in terms of improving their quality of life?	What do the residents value? In what ways are these values not being accommodated by their physical environment?	• Canvassing • Field Observation • Interviews • Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings	• Safety • Socializing • Aesthetics • Youth recreation	• Accommodate neighborhood safety concerns • Improve the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood • Aid in the creation of neighborhood identity and pride • Design to accommodate children and teenagers
What are improvements can be made in the neighborhood?	What are the opportunities? What are the constraints? What has been done to address the local issues?	• Canvassing • Field Observation • Interviews • Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings	• Lighting in the streets and by the river • Place for children to play • Social space for adults • There is a lack of available land in the neighborhood • Environmentally focused design has thus far lacked community support (e.g. Cudahy River Park)	• Many potential improvements could be made to the river path and access ramp • Environmental improvements should not be made at the expense of community benefit

Big Question	Sub Questions	Methods	Results	Implications
What are the best locations to build the project?	What are the criteria for a potential site? What are the barriers to a potential site? How can the site serve the community?	• Field Observation • Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings	• Accessible to all and lacking territorial claims • Located on a common walking route or location of frequent neighborhood use • Territoriality could make some feel unwelcome • Government ownership slows process • High value property makes use unlikely	• Spaces associated with apartment complexes too connected to territoriality • Large, vacant parcel on Santa Ana Street too valuable and thus unlikely • The carniceria site received wide community approval, due to its treasured place in the community and its location along common walking routes • The carniceria location could serve as a rest stop on the walk to the river, park, or school, and as a social space in an active pedestrian thoroughfare
What design interventions would be best for the site?	What colors reflect the preferences of the community? What types of plants are appropriate for the site? What colors and materials are best suited for the project? What spatial arrangements are best?	• Design Workshops • Steering Committee Meetings • Community Meetings	• A mix of bright colors and earth tones • Drought tolerant plants that add color • Social seating • Well defined edges • Six percent landscape increase requirement placed on the carniceria site by the city	• Utilize the colors selected by the community • Implement the plants selected by the community • Utilize infiltration trenches to meet the city's requirements

The project team canvasses the neighborhood.

Canvassing

Beginning in November 2015, the project team canvassed the neighborhood to develop an understanding of La Santana, meet residents, explain the project, and gather the names and contact information of community members who had interest in being a part of a leadership steering committee (see Section 1.4).

Canvassing occurred during daylight hours on the days of Monday, November 2, 2015, Saturday, November 7, 2015, Sunday, November 8, 2015, Monday, November 9, 2015, and Saturday, November 14, 2015. Groups of two students and a Spanish language translator went door-to-door discussing the project with residents of the neighborhood, interviewing them about the community, and identifying potential steering committee members to guide the development of the project. Students knocked on doors of residences along the following streets: Santa Ana Avenue, Elizabeth Street, Wilcox Avenue, and Cecelia Street. The team focused on questions such as:

- How long have you resided in the community?
- What are your feelings about the community?
- What are your feelings about the LA River?

The project team meets with the committee in a committee member's garage. Smaller steering committee meetings allow for more focused group discussion and decision making.

- Are you interested in being involved in a steering committee?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meetings

The project team collaborated with members of the steering committee to better connect students to the larger community (see Section 1.4). The steering committee initially included 10 people, with a woman involved with the city council whose teenage daughter participated in river cleanup, her children and partner, a mother with two children who passed by and inquired about the meeting, a man with his toddler aged son, a woman with a middle-school aged daughter and toddler, and a high school student whose family has an urban farming operation. As the project evolved, some committee members dropped off while others joined along the way, including a member of the city planning commission and a politically active married couple. Despite these fluctuations, the steering committee retained consistent numbers between six and eight. Steering committee meetings answered several questions which were important in developing and fostering the project.

Steering Committee Meeting One

The first steering committee meeting was held on December 5, 2015, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. outdoors at Cudahy Park with 10 steering committee members. The project team set up portable chairs, tables, flip charts, food and beverages. This meeting asked the following questions:

- What is your relationship to the Los Angeles River?
- How do you define your neighborhood boundaries?
- What are places that you feel safe or unsafe?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meeting Two

The second steering committee meeting was held on January 17, 2016, at a plaza in front of City Hall with five committee members from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The project team set up portable chairs, tables, food, and beverages. This meeting focused on the following questions:

- What are safe places in the community?
- What are places that you feel unsafe?
- What walking routes do you take to places you visit in the neighborhood?
- What do you think makes a good project site?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meeting Three

The third steering committee meeting was held on February 6, 2016, in a committee member's garage with ten committee members, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The project team set up chairs, tables, flip charts, food, and beverages. This meeting was designed to select potential project sites and answered the following questions:

- What sites are most appropriate for the project?
- What are the opportunities and constraints of each site?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meeting Four

The fourth steering committee meeting was held on March 5, 2016, in a committee member's garage with five committee members from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The project team set up chairs, tables, food, and beverages. The project team gathered information by asking questions such as:

- How can the different designs the community came up with be synthesized into one design?
- How can the project team incorporate ideas to support the programming?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Community Meetings

The project team used community meetings with the intent of collecting and sharing information and making community decisions (see Section 1.4). These meetings focused on specific questions developing throughout the course of the project.

Community Meeting One

The first community meeting was held on January 16, 2016, outside the Cudahy Civic Center with 25 to 30 community members from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The project team set up tables, chairs, flip charts, food, and beverages. The team focused on several questions such as:

- What are safe and unsafe places in the neighborhood?
- What makes these locations feel safe and unsafe?
- What are typical walking routes in the neighborhood and why?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Community Meeting Two

The second community meeting was held on February 13, 2016, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in a committee member's garage with ten community members. The project team set up chairs, tables, flip charts, provided materials for a design activity, food, and beverages. Questions asked during this meeting included:

- What are important things to consider when designing the site?
- How can elements in the site support programming?
- What are ways to effectively communicate design with the community?

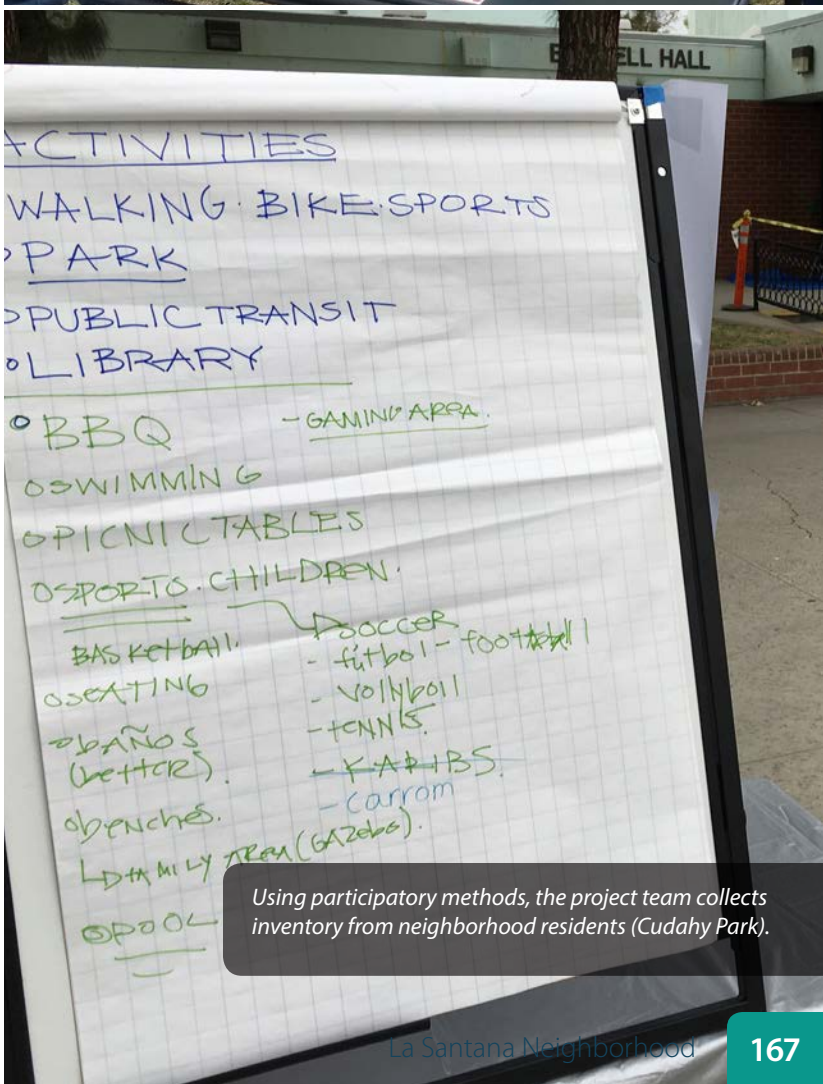
(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Community Meeting Three

The third community meeting was held on March 12, 2016, in a committee member's garage with ten community members from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The project team set up chairs, tables, food, and beverages and focused on answering questions such as:

- What types of seating materials would the community prefer?

The project team facilitates a community meeting at Cudahy Park.



Using participatory methods, the project team collects inventory from neighborhood residents (Cudahy Park).

- What types of trees, shrubs, and groundcover can be incorporated into the site?
- What paint colors does the community prefer for the space?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Community Meeting Four

The fourth community meeting was held on April 2, 2016, outside the selected carniceria site with ten community members from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The project team set up chairs, tables, food, and beverages. Questions were asked in order to finalize design details, such as:

- What colors do you prefer on the site and why?
- What kinds of vegetation works best and why?
- Are there aspects of the finalized site plan that need to change and why?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Site Selection Walks

As described in the introduction, the project team conducted site selection walks in order to identify potential sites for the project (see Section 1.4). These walks focused on identifying potential project sites.

Site Selection Walk One

The first site walk took place on January 16, 2016, with the five committee members from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The project team asked questions such as:

- What aspects make a site good or bad for the project?
- Are there specific sites in the neighborhood that might be good for the project?
- What types of things should the project team consider when choosing a site?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

The project team facilitates site walks with both the steering committee and wider community.

Site Selection Walk Two

After the site walk with the committee, the project team conducted a community site walk on January 16, 2016, in conjunction with the community meeting from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Twenty five to thirty community members participated and answered questions such as:

- What characteristics make a site good or bad for the project?
- Are there specific sites in the neighborhood that might be good for the project?
- What types of things should the project team consider when choosing a site?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Design Workshops

As described in the introduction, a design workshop was used by the project team to develop design interventions with the committee and community-at-large (see Section 1.4). This workshop focused on answering questions about design.

Design Workshop One

Held on February 27, 2016, at Clara Park Community Center, ten community members participated in the workshop from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The project team set up chairs and tables provided by the community center, materials for participants, food, and beverages. Students focused on community feedback answering questions such as:

- What are important things to consider when designing the site?
- How can elements in the site support programming?
- What are ways to effectively communicate ideas through design?
- What are the important aspects of site analysis?
- How should the site be arranged spatially?
- Which design elements should be included?

(see Section 6.4 for details of the results).

Residents arrange ready-made design elements on a base map of the carniceria at the first community design workshop.

Work Days

As described in the introduction, the project team used work days to implement the designs developed by residents and student teams (see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day One

The first work day took place on Friday, April 15, 2016, at the carniceria project site from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. with three committee members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Cleaning and preparing the site for painting
- Painting portions of the site

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Two

The second work day took place on Saturday, April 16, 2016, at the project site from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with five community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Painting the site

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Three

The third work day occurred on Saturday April 23, 2016, at the project site from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with ten community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Demolishing concrete to provide drainage for vegetation
- Constructing two planters with seating

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Four

The fourth work day occurred on Sunday April 24, 2016, at the project site from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with four community members. Tasks included:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Attaching seating surfaces to planters

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Six

The sixth work day occurred on Sunday, May 1, 2016, at the project site from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with 10 to 15 community members. The project team set up a shade canopy and focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Preparing and attaching seating surfaces
- Painting wood surfaces

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Painting the site at the start of the project helped foster immediate enthusiasm and increased overall community involvement.

High rates of participation were key to the project's success.

Work Day Seven

The seventh work day took place on Friday, May 6, 2016, at the carniceria project site from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with three committee members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Preparing the site for the next day's work
- Drilling holes for wall and shade structure posts
- Securing posts to the ground
- Laying out and attaching the first layer of concrete blocks to the ground

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Eight

The eighth work day took place on Saturday May 7, 2016 at the project site from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with ten community members. The project team set up tables, chairs, and a shade canopy and focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Completing the construction of the seat wall
- Attaching and painting seating surfaces

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Nine

The ninth work day occurred on Friday, May 13, 2016, at the project site from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with ten community members. The project team set up tables, chairs, and a shade canopy and focused on:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Constructing a wood wall on the left side of the project site
- Sanding wood for the shade structure

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Ten

The tenth work day occurred on Saturday, May 14, 2016, at the project site where two students met community members at 7:00 a.m. to begin work and two other students met later in the day to focus on the following tasks:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Continuing work on the wood back for the seating and the wall
- Continuing to sand and paint wood for the shade structure

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Eleven

The eleventh work day took place on Sunday, May 15, 2016, at the project site from 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with the project team and focused on:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Constructing the top of the shade structure

The project was constructed with materials that were accessible to community members of all skill levels.

The dedication of community members was evident in their persistent participation throughout long build days.

- Attaching the shade structure to the posts

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Twelve

The twelfth work day began on Friday, May 20, 2016, at Park Lawn Cemetery located in Commerce, a few miles from the project site in order to gather soil for planting at 10:00 a.m. Soil was loaded into a team member's truck and then driven to the project site. Team members focused on the following tasks:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Unloading soil and shoveling it into designated planting areas

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Thirteen

The thirteenth work day took place on Saturday, May 21, 2016. Two students met in East Los Angeles to load mulch and compost into the back of a truck for use as soil amendments at the project site at 9:00 a.m. Two other students met at the project site to assist in adding the amendments to the soil at 11:00 a.m. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Amending the soil with mulch
- Planting in designated areas
- Adding additional soil where necessary

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Fourteen

The fourteenth work day occurred on Saturday, May 28, 2016, at the project site with six community members from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The project team focused on:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Cleaning the site by sweeping and washing surfaces
- Painting portions of the ground surface
- Installing screens behind the wood walls to prevent trash accumulation

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Fifteen

The fifteenth work day occurred on Sunday, May 29, 2016, at the project site from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with three community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

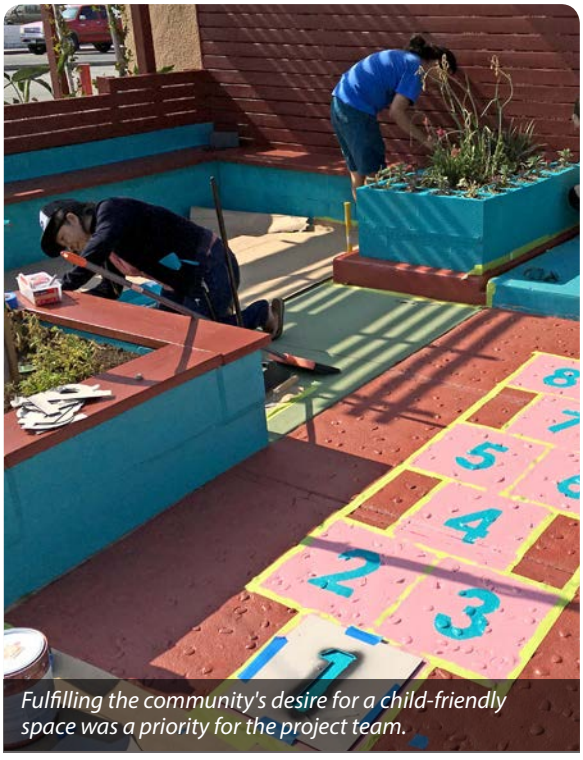
- Checking results from the previous work day
- Painting all surfaces

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Sixteen

Work day sixteen took place on Saturday, June 4, 2016, at the project site with six community

The participation of younger community members was an important reflection of neighborhood demographics.



Fulfilling the community's desire for a child-friendly space was a priority for the project team.

members from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The project team focused on the following tasks:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Measuring and marking the outlines for infiltration trenches
- Cutting asphalt for trenches
- Removing asphalt
- Filling in trenches with aggregate

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Seventeen

The seventeenth work day took place on Sunday, June 5, 2016, at the project site. Two team members began work at 8:00 a.m., another at 10:00 a.m., and a fourth team member joined at 11:00 a.m. The project team worked until 9:30 p.m. Four community members joined throughout the day and focused on tasks such as:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Finishing making cuts for trenches
- Finishing removing asphalt to create trench openings
- Filling trenches with aggregate
- Creating planting areas using concrete masonry units (CMUs) glued to the ground
- Painting bollards to match the color language of Plaza Milagro

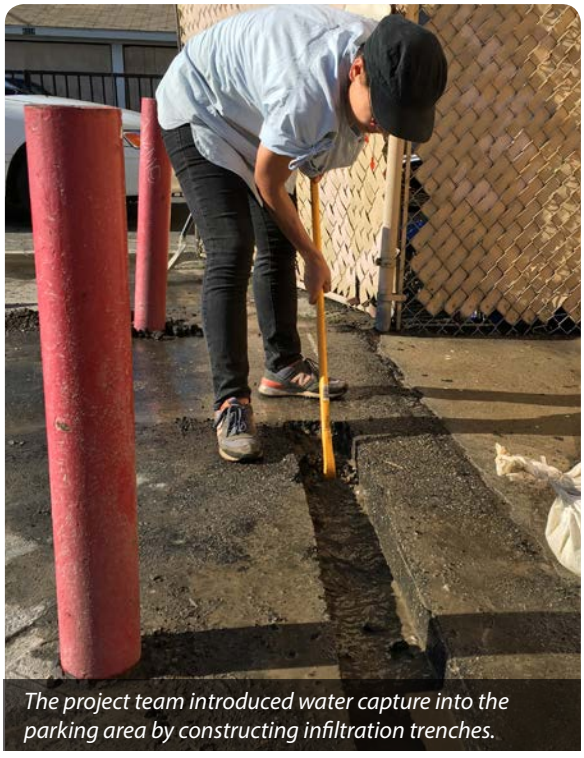
(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Eighteen

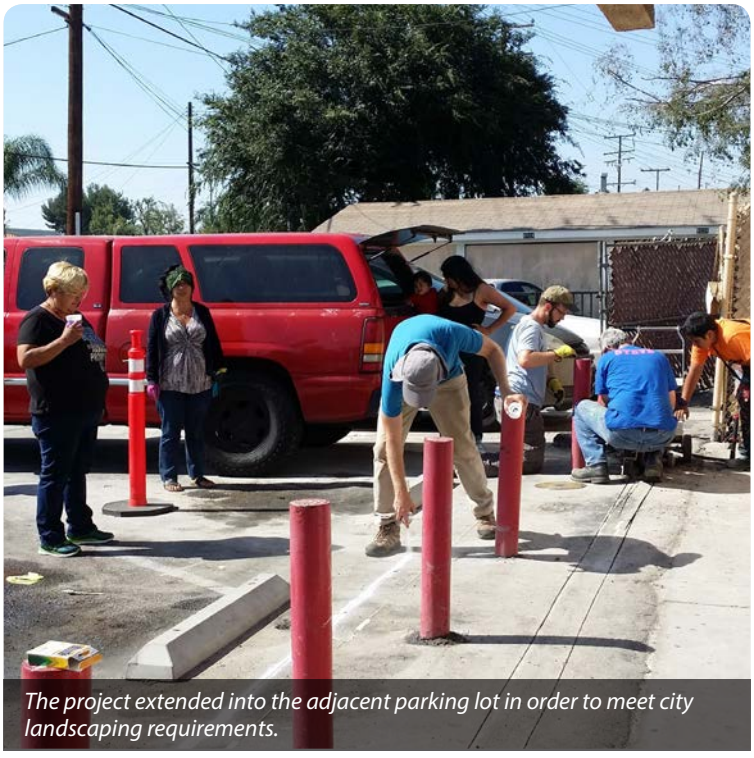
The eighteenth work day occurred on Saturday, June 11, 2016, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. with 12 community members at the project site. The team focused on:

- Checking results from the previous work day
- Completing the construction of the planters in front of the wheel stops
- Painting planters
- Painting ground surfaces

(see Section 6.5 for details of the results).



The project team introduced water capture into the parking area by constructing infiltration trenches.



The project extended into the adjacent parking lot in order to meet city landscaping requirements.

Neighborhood Demographics

While Cudahy is one of the densest cities in the state, the La Santana neighborhood surpasses even Cudahy's averages. With roughly 4600 residents within its boundaries, the neighborhood has a density of 28,000 people per square mile, far above the county average of 2419 people per square mile and even the City of Los Angeles' density of 8092 people per square mile (2010 U.S. Census). Ethnically the neighborhood is 96% Hispanic (compared to 48% at the county level), with the remaining population being split almost evenly between white and African American residents (OEHHA, 2014; American Community Survey, 2014). Economically the neighborhood is working class, with a 2012 median household income estimated at $39,534 (far below the county median of $46,128) and roughly 63% of residents living below twice the federal poverty level (OEHHA, 2014; (American Community Survey, 2014). Of the population over 25 years of age, roughly 60% have attained less than a high school degree, in comparison to only 23% at the county level (OEHHA, 2014; American Community Survey, 2014).

Historic Context

In 1810 the King of Spain gifted 29,513 acres of land to Don Antonio Maria Lugo, a former cavalry corporal. Despite the massive Rancho San Antonio being partitioned and sold off in 1855, Lugo retained 4239 acres, living on seven acre Lugo Ranch. With his death in 1860, the land was passed to Vincent Lugo. Nature, however, conspired against Vincent, and the disastrous floods of both the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers in 1862 were compounded by drought in 1863 and 1864. The following year Lugo sold the family's remaining land at public auction, where it was purchased for 95 cents per acre (City of Cudahy, 2015).

The land changed hands many times over the next four decades before eventually being bought by Irish meat baron Michael Cudahy in 1908. After establishing his fortune in the mid-western meat packing industry with brother Patrick (for whom Cudahy, Wisconsin is named), Michael Cudahy moved to Los Angeles, bought a large land holding, and subdivided the land into the long, one acre parcels that still exist today (City of Cudahy, 2015).

Cudahy and the surrounding area developed as a hub of the steel and automotive industries in the years following World War II. The city remained a predominantly white, blue collar community until the industrial decline of the 1970's, when the demographics of the area began a dramatic shift. The city's Caucasian population was replaced by

A rare example of a Cudahy parcel with agricultural use (Elizabeth Street).

Cudahy's long parcels, once used for agriculture, are now filled with dense residential housing. Photo credit: ESRI

Cudahy River Park is across the street from the river bike path entrance.

a wave of Latino immigrants (Los Angeles Times, 2007). Today, the city is a predominantly working class Latino community that exhibits income, homeownership, and education levels far below county averages.

In 2012, the city was involved in a corruption scandal that implicated the mayor, a council member, and a city employee in accepting bribes in return for their support of a medical marijuana dispensary. The city responded by electing a new, younger and highly educated city council, including 26-year-old Vice-Mayor Christian Hernandez and 29-year-old Mayor Cristian Markovich (LA Times, 2015).

Past and Future Projects

Park Projects

Most of the open space in Cudahy is concentrated in three city parks (Lugo Park, Clara Park, and Cudahy Park) which are distributed throughout the city, along with one pocket park (Cudahy River Park) close to the river. Recently, Clara Park saw a major expansion that included the installation of workout equipment, better lighting, and recreational fields. There are currently plans to add an artificial turf soccer field to Lugo Park.

Cudahy River Park, designed by Northeast Trees, was intended as a passive rest stop for bicyclists along the county bike path and as a

The Clara Park expansion was designed for active recreation.

way to capture and treat stormwater (North East Trees, 2011). However, due to the city's limited resources, maintenance of the park has suffered recently. Many residents feel the limited social space and enclosed, passive nature of the park does not meet their needs.

Safe Routes to School Plan

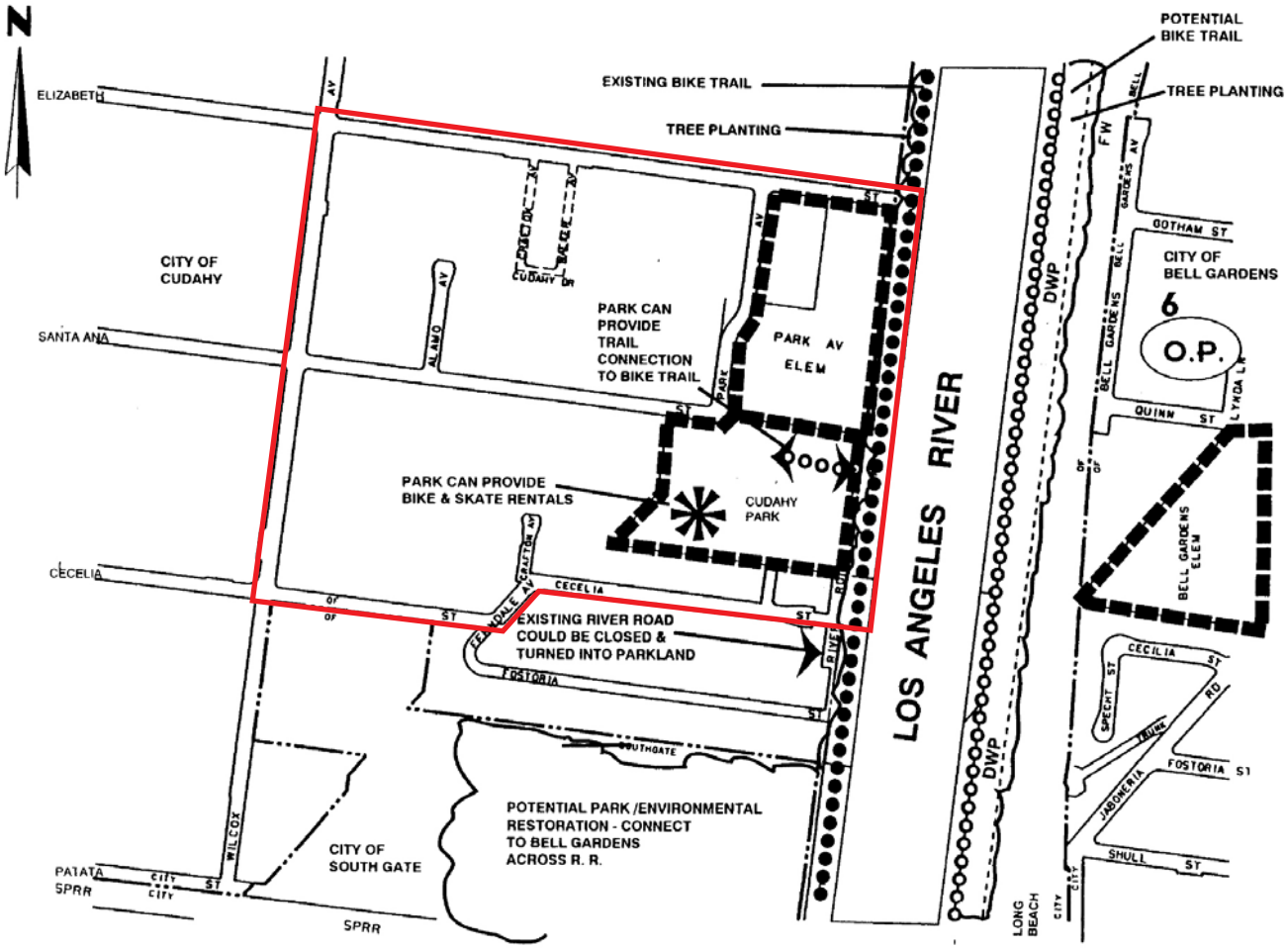
Cudahy participates in the Safe Routes to School program (www.saferoutesinfo.org) which aims to make walking and bicycling safer and more attractive to Cudahy's students and parents. In 2015, the city adopted a joint plan between the County Department of Public Health and the city which contains extensive engineering recommendations to improve pedestrian conditions, including curb extensions, better marked intersections, roundabouts, and better signs. The plan also recommends a system of new bike lanes, separated paths, and sharrows to reduce accidents and improve the cyclist is experience (City of Cudahy, 2015).

City General Plan Update

Cudahy is currently in the process of updating their general plan. The new plan calls for additional improvements to city parks and identifies the need for increased open space projects.

Los Angeles River Master Plan

The county's 1996 master plan for the river includes suggestions for open space improvements along River Road in Cudahy. The plan calls for closing off the road to vehicular traffic, planting trees, and creating a linear park, but the idea was never implemented. However, in 2015, a group of volunteers from the organization LA Works completed one of the county's other recommendations: painting a river-themed mural along the levee wall leading to the county bike path.



Recommendations for Cudahy along the Los Angeles River (from the 1996 Los Angeles River Master Plan)

Table 6.3 Cudahy Past and Future Projects and Relevance to La Santana Neighborhood

Project	Relevance
Park Projects	Current park projects in Cudahy are focused on maintenance and on adding features to existing parks. While beneficial and revealing of many of the desires and needs of city residents, these renovations do not increase the amount of open space available in the neighborhood. Despite significant deterioration, no major park renovations are currently planned for La Santana's Cudahy Park.
Safe Routes to School Plan	La Santana neighborhood has significant pedestrian and bike use. Plans for a safer streetscape will improve the walking and biking experience of residents in the neighborhood.
Cudahy City General Plan Update	The update highlights the need for new open space opportunities throughout the city to help alleviate park poverty in dense neighborhoods such as La Santana.
Los Angeles River Master Plan (1996)	The majority of the plan's goals and recommendations for Cudahy are within the boundaries of the La Santana neighborhood. While most of these ideas never gained traction, the underlying concepts are important to consider.

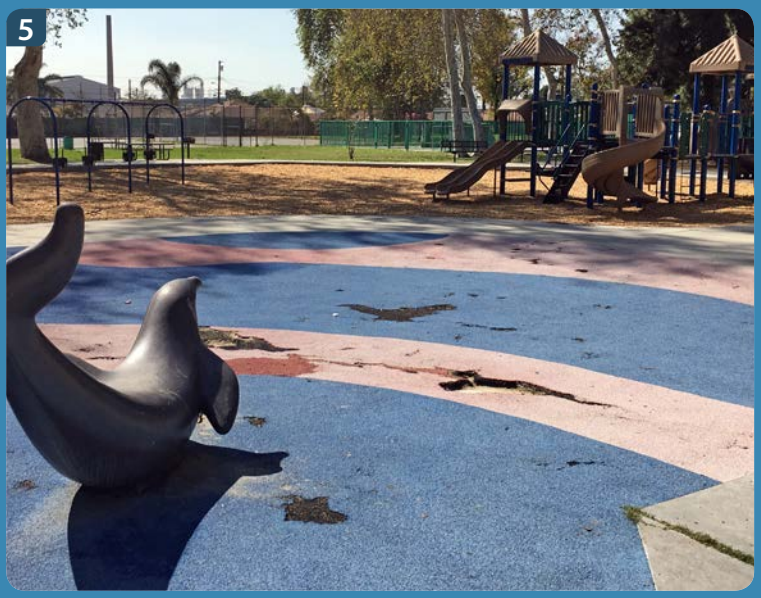
A river-themed mural, completed by volunteers in 2015, runs along the levee wall facing River Road.

Experiential Quality

Properties in La Santana were historically parceled into long, one acre lots. Over time the majority of these were developed into one and two story multi-family dwellings often isolated from the street by long driveways and/or gates. These units, which include apartments and townhomes, typically face inward towards a central drive or walkway which bisects the one acre properties—creating what amounts to micro-neighborhoods—where children play and neighbors socialize. Some parcels have been combined and developed into gated properties with hard and softscapes that often contrast with other properties on the same street. These long parcels are present in the majority of streets in the neighborhood and provide the physical building blocks of the community.

While the majority of these lots have been filled with apartments, some of the historical agricultural land uses remain on a few properties—with gardens and farming continuing on the lots. Most properties however, do not include any agriculture, and some lots include large areas of open dirt, gravel, and weeds. Tree canopy coverage in the neighborhood is roughly 10%, according to an analysis the team conducted using i-Tree software. This is typical of the study region, but is less than the Los Angeles county average, which is 20% (McPherson et al., 2011). This lack in canopy coverage is not lost on residents, with many indicating a desire for more trees throughout the neighborhood. On-street parking dominates the neighborhood streetscape due primarily to the high population density and

Figure 6.1 Experiential Quality in La Santana Neighborhood



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1 La Santana's long residential lots divide the street into several mini-neighborhoods.

2 Due to the neighborhood's high density, residents are frustrated by problems with street parking.

3 Park Avenue quickly fills up with pedestrians and cars when Park Avenue Elementary School lets out.

4 The corner of Wilcox Avenue and Santa Ana Street, on La Santana's western border, is the neighborhood's sole commercial area.

5 Cudahy Park is a popular location but is plagued with maintenance issues.

6 The sun sets over small apartment complexes on Elizabeth Street.

the limited parking facilities in the multi-family dwellings, which lack designated parking areas and garages. Conversations with the community revealed challenges related to city parking regulations which prohibit overnight street parking.

All streets in the neighborhood include sidewalks, and pedestrian activity is high. Street lighting in the neighborhood varies amongst street facing homes and multi family parcels, creating disparate conditions for pedestrians at night. The presence of graffiti is a constant concern, although the city is relatively quick to respond to acts of vandalism in public spaces. Residents shared their discontent with maintenance of public space, particularly Cudahy Park and the prevalence of litter in the streets.

As noted in the Past and Future Projects (see Table 6.3), 2015 saw the completion of a river themed mural on the Los Angeles River Levee along River Road. Public artwork is rare in the city, and the mural adds color and vibrancy. While graffiti is extremely common throughout the neighborhood, residents have indicated that the mural is almost never tagged.

Although some home owners care for and maintain their properties, the high percentage of renters in the neighborhood contributes to a generally ambiguous neighborhood identity.

Neighborhood Identity

Unlike many areas in the study region, La Santana lacks a distinct and uniform neighborhood identity. Questions at project meetings related to unique neighborhood character, shared identity, or even a neighborhood name generally elicited blank stares and few responses. There is a general sense of ambivalence, and few residents have overtly positive feelings toward the neighborhood. One resident, when asked during a canvassing session if he had any ideas regarding how to improve the community, responded: “I’m thinking about moving.” An expressed desire to leave the neighborhood was not uncommon among residents. While older residents were likely to complain about the neighborhood’s crime and 'ugliness,' young residents lamented the lack of recreational opportunities or social amenities within the city. The corruption scandal of 2012 (see Historical Context) further tarnished residents’ view of the city, and despite the drastic change in elected officials since that time, distrust of the local government remains high.

An examination of the neighborhood’s physical characteristics also shows a lack of distinct local culture or character. This may be due in part to the absence of ownership residents feel toward their homes. As the majority of community members are renters, they may lack either formal consent or perceived permission to adorn the areas around their homes. This lack of residential adornment may also be related to a high turnover rate of renters, as many have indicated that new renters are constantly coming and going in La Santana, particularly in the apartments on Santa Ana Street. As many homes in La Santana are one or two story apartments or town houses, opportunities to enhance residential landscapes are infrequent and generally limited to those living in single family homes.

Efforts at fostering neighborhood identity through public space design are also lacking. While the river-themed mural on River Road adds color and vibrancy to the neighborhood, it should be noted that the river theme was designed by artist Saul Ponce in collaboration with the organization LA Works and not by the residents themselves, whose perceptions of the river generally range from ambivalent to overtly negative. One wonders what residents may have chosen for their mural, were they given the power to decide.

Recreation

Although formal recreational opportunities exist in La Santana, the neighborhood currently has approximately 1.4 acres of park land per thousand residents (see Map 6.2), far below the long time 10 acres/1000 people national guideline and roughly half the 3 acres/1000 park poverty benchmark (The City Project, 2009). The primary recreational facility in the neighborhood is Cudahy Park, a 6.7 acre park containing soccer and baseball fields, barbecue pits, a playground, a small skate park, and basketball courts. While residents expressed their desire to see this park improved with regards to maintenance and aesthetics, mapping exercises nevertheless revealed it to be one of their favorite places in the neighborhood due to the variety of recreational activities it supports and its use as social space.

Nearby Clara Park also offers recreational opportunities, and recently underwent a large expansion that included the addition of exercise equipment. Park Avenue Elementary School also contains a substantial schoolyard. Since this facility is gated and locked outside of school hours, it does not provide recreational services to the community at large.

Though the neighborhood is bordered by the Los Angeles River, the river path sits ten feet above the community, and the river is only visible from the levee above River Road. Despite its close proximity, the physical barriers to the river separate it from the neighborhood. While some community members indicated occasional use of the trail for transportation or recreational purposes, these residents were in the minority, due in large part to safety concerns (see Safety). Discussions of use were frequently qualified with comments such as “but I’d never go there at night.”

Despite negative feelings about the river, several community members included it as a favorite place during community mapping exercises, while ranking it as one of the most dangerous. Clearly the community’s relationship to the river is complex. This may be due in part to the fact that river use varies significantly among residents, with some using the path frequently and others avoiding it altogether. While the river path provides opportunities for recreation and

Cudahy Park sees frequent use and is a popular location for soccer.

The entrance to the Los Angeles River bike path in La Santana is across from Park Avenue Elementary school (photo looking north).

The Los Angeles River bike path, pictured near its entrance on River Road, continues south to Long Beach Harbor.

Children play in the informal spaces between houses within Cudahy's long parcels.

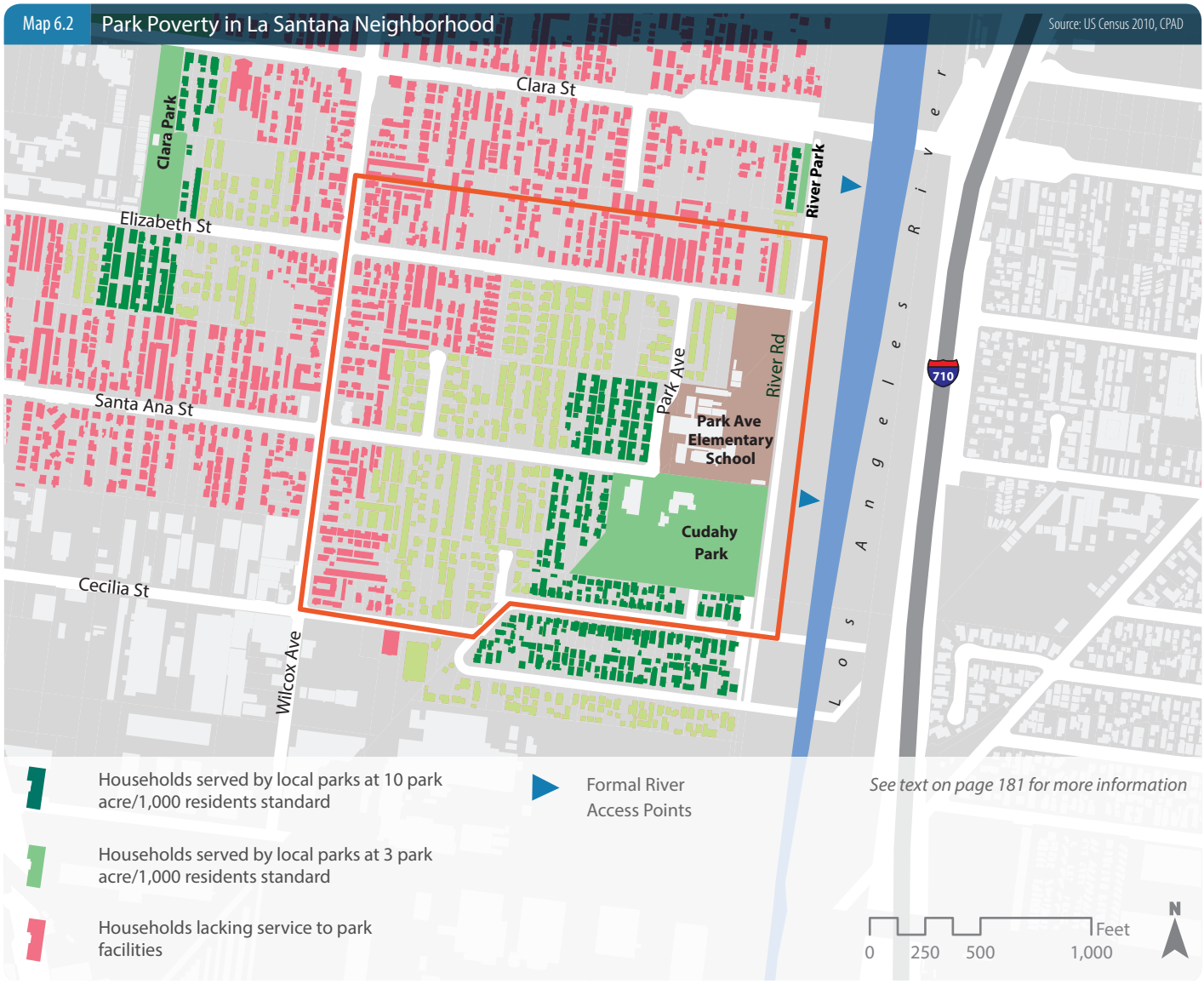
active transportation, these opportunities are undermined by safety concerns. The nearby Cudahy River Park elicited similar concerns for safety due to use by the homeless and drug users, as well as complaints that the park was frequently locked and that the native plant palette “looked dead."

The neighborhood’s urban form is defined largely by the long, narrow parcels created during the area’s subdivision at the turn of the 20th century. As these previously single family parcels have since been developed with either a single or double row of apartments along the parcels’ perimeter, the resulting structureless space is composed of either a long driveway that sits between the rows of apartments, or linear vacant land adjacent to the apartments. These areas are frequent sites of recreation, and it is common to find children at play, adults gardening, adolescents kicking a soccer ball, and birthday parties taking place. Despite their frequent use, these areas are generally seen as belonging to the residents of a particular apartment complex. This territoriality is exemplified in community meeting participants expressing annoyance at children from other complexes spending time in their complexes.

Overall, residents expressed discontent with the recreational opportunities in the area, with many indicating that few people who live in the neighborhood spend free time there, and that residents are forced to leave to enjoy themselves. This feeling was particularly common among adolescents and young adults.

Map 6.2 Park Poverty in La Santana Neighborhood

Source: US Census 2010, CPAD



See text on page 181 for more information

Patterns of Life

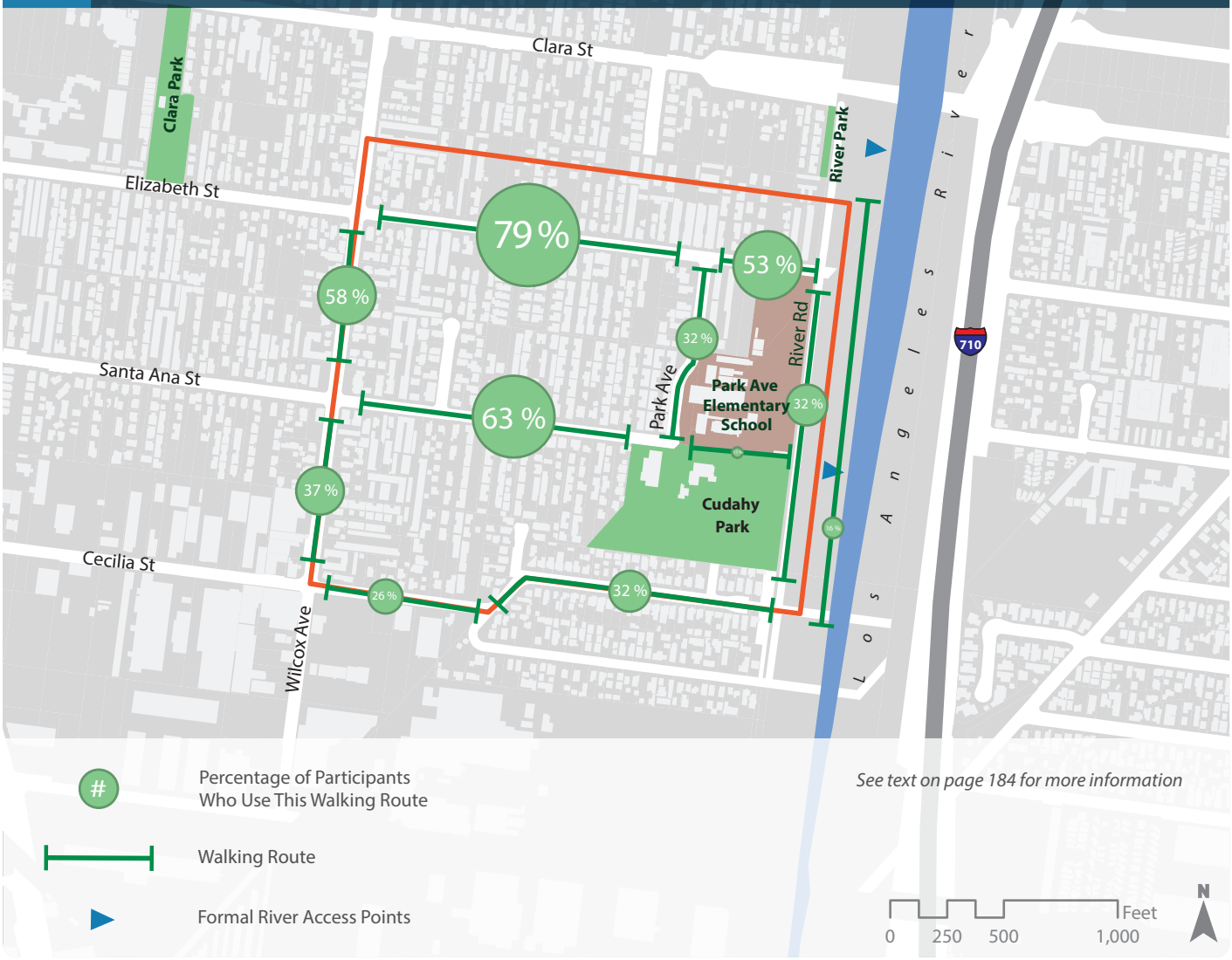
An analysis of community patterns and preferences gave the project team additional insights into the community life of La Santana. An analysis of local walking routes and their frequency of use by participants (see Map 6.3) found that major walking routes exist on Elizabeth Street and Santa Ana Street, while Cecilia Street is a far less common route. Most walking appears to occur in the rectangle that is defined by Elizabeth Street, Santa Ana Street, Park Avenue, and Wilcox Avenue.

This finding is supported by field observation indicating a high degree of sidewalk use on these streets. While the river bike path receives infrequent use, River Road, the adjacent street, is somewhat more popular, despite the safety concerns posed by frequent drag racing and the road's relative isolation (see Safety and Security).

By conducting an inventory of community members' favorite places (see Map 6.4), the project team learned that Cudahy Park is a clear favorite location despite vocal desires for improvements related to the park's appearance and maintenance. The project team also discovered that the intersection of Santa Ana Street and Wilcox Avenue is a highly ranked favorite in the community, despite safety concerns. This intersection is unadorned to the extent that two of its businesses have been cited by the city for non-compliance with landscape ordinances. It was also listed as one of the neighborhood's most dangerous locations because a man was murdered at this location in 2015, in addition to perceived danger on Santa Ana Street (see Safety and Security).

Map 6.3 Common Walking Routes in La Santana Neighborhood

Source: Community Input



See text on page 184 for more information

Nevertheless, the analysis of local walking routes indicates that this intersection is at the juncture of two of the neighborhood's most common paths (see Map 6.5). This is unsurprising as it links much of the community to both Cudahy Park and Park Avenue Elementary. Additionally, this intersection provides the only commercial space in the neighborhood, and includes two small markets, a laundromat, and a meat market, thus making it one of the only places in the neighborhood where residents can meet some of their basic needs. The corner is a social node within the community, and a space where residents are likely to have impromptu social interactions with friends or neighbors.

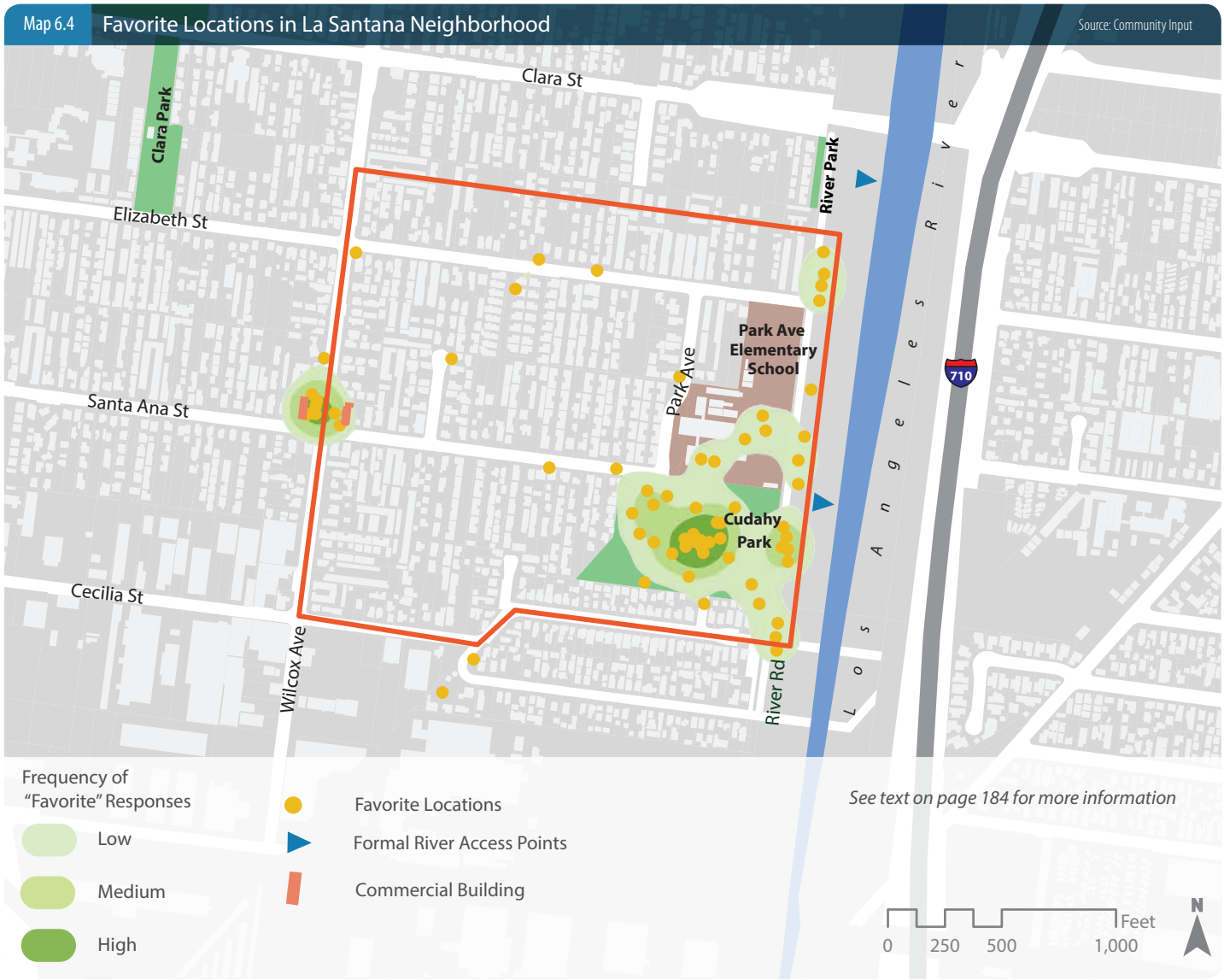
Despite the fact that few residents indicated that they use the river trail as a walking route, the river was not without its supporters: several residents included the river as a favorite location. Committee members suggested this was due to the potential for recreation, and that the relatively polarized responses regarding the river are the result of the split between those who never use the river and those who use it frequently.

Safety and Security

Safety concerns have been a recurring topic for residents throughout the project, with the most pervasive perceived threats to the neighborhood being crime and homelessness. Crime in the City of Cudahy has been undergoing a decline since its peak roughly twenty years ago. While the 1990s saw violent crime rates rise to over 1500 incidents per 100,000 residents, it has hovered between 400 and 700 since 2003 (FBI, 2016).

Map 6.4 Favorite Locations in La Santana Neighborhood

Source: Community Input



See text on page 184 for more information

Although local residents acknowledge that the neighborhood is safer than in the past, safety remained a primary and repeated concern. Residents' reluctance to utilize the river bike path was frequently based on concerns of safety. Inquiries regarding residents' use of the river bike path or the nearby Cudahy River Park were met with complaints of drug use and the river was referred to as a "highway for the homeless" by numerous residents. Feedback regarding the river frequently focused on how safety could be improved, rather than on aesthetic or ecological goals. One resident expressed her openness to use the trail if lighting were added, and voiced her preference that vegetation be kept low to preserve visibility.

In addition to the river and adjacent trail, community members also revealed that access to the river is fraught with danger (see Map 6.5).

River Road, which provides the only access to the river, is a common location for drag racing. Residents also indicated that the road is too dark at night, and feels isolated due to the lack of pedestrian use or access, except through the park. Residents also expressed their concern for the speed at which police vehicles drive up the river bike path's pedestrian and bicycle ramp.

Interestingly, many of the locations the community indicated to be areas of high danger were also areas of high use or favorite neighborhood locations (see Map 6.4). Santa Ana Street, for example, was considered to be dangerous from the corner with Wilcox Avenue to its terminus at Cudahy Park, due to feelings of isolation, the presence of gangs and drug use, and a lack of lighting at night. The street was nevertheless one of the most common

Map 6.5 Unsafe Locations in La Santana Neighborhood

Source: Community Input

See text on page 185 for more information

walking routes in the neighborhood. The corner of Santa Ana Street and Wilcox Avenue was considered to be highly dangerous, but was also regarded as one of the community's favorite locations, with only Cudahy Park receiving more favorable responses. Despite the neighbors' perception of the corner as a dangerous location, its location as a social hub and the only commercial area in the neighborhood mark it as important.

Implications for Design

All in all, inventory results reveal a portrait of a neighborhood marred by the fear of crime and hurt by political corruption. It is a neighborhood that lacks self esteem, derides its own physical surroundings, and has little sense of community identity. And yet it is also a neighborhood with the optimism to elect one of the youngest city councils in the county and organize efforts to improve the neighborhood. It is a neighborhood that fears and ignores the Los Angeles River but finds deep value in the bare concrete street corner between a carniceria and laundromat. From the inventory process, several important themes arise that deserve consideration. These themes will affect where the project is located and the type of project that is built.

Safety must be addressed, regardless of the project that is ultimately built. Seeming contradictions, like the fact that some of the locations considered unsafe were also residents' favorite locations, suggest the issue is not cut-and-dry. Furthermore, a well-designed project could have the potential to improve the security in an unsafe location by drawing in more visitors and improving visibility.

Regardless of location and type, the project should ideally attempt to improve safety in that location—especially if an unsafe location is chosen.

An important consideration when selecting a site location is choosing a site that is easily accessible to all residents. The ideal location would be somewhere on one of the neighborhood's primary walking routes—and preferably along one of the routes to the river—as this would foster connections to the river by increasing accessibility, regardless of whether or not the project is directly adjacent to the river.

The community's lack of a shared identity and aesthetic concerns must also be addressed in the design process. By designing the project directly with the community, it is hoped that the final outcome will reflect their aesthetic sensibilities, and will result in a space with a high degree of community ownership and cultural competence. The design should also aim at creating some kind of social space, not only in the hope of ameliorating the boredom of the neighborhood's youth who feel forced to leave the neighborhood to enjoy themselves, but as a location to foster community connection and growth.

It is hoped that the final project design will address community identified-problems by creating community-designed solutions.

Organization Building

In order to generate interest in the project as well as identify potential steering committee members, the project team canvassed the neighborhood. Canvassing took place over two months, from November to December 2015. The project team went door-to-door, beginning at the eastern ends of Elizabeth Street, Santa Ana Street, and Celia Street and ending as far west as Atlantic Boulevard. However, these streets were not necessarily canvassed equally due to accessibility differences. For example, Elizabeth Street residences had fewer locked gates blocking access to the front door and, as a result, more people were contacted on this street.

The project team prepares brochures for canvassing.

During canvassing, the project team asked neighbors questions about their neighborhood, gauged their level of interest, and asked potential leaders if they would like to get involved. Several themes emerged based on conversations with neighbors. They were 1) safety, 2) lighting, 3) parks/open space, 4) homelessness, 5) homeowners versus renters, and 6) accessibility of the river and of current open space. These issues were considered important in the neighborhood and helped identify which inventory was necessary.

Canvassing took place in two teams of two to three people each. One group had Spanish fluency, while the other brought a translator to assist with Spanish only households. The teams worked on the same days, but canvassed separate areas. To assist with canvassing, the project team developed a bilingual tri fold brochure, contact sheets, neighborhood base maps, team business cards, and name tags. The tri fold brochure included a description of the project, goals, information about the 606 studio, and contact information.

Initial canvassing was done on five separate days (Saturdays, Sundays, or Mondays) in sessions of two to four hours. After a total of 14 canvassing hours, the two teams gathered the names and contact information of 47 interested neighbors, noting demographics such as age, sex, and race. Of those 47 people, 22 were identified as potential committee members based on their responses to the project team's questions and their level of interest in the project. The project team made an effort to select potential committee members which represented the demographics of the neighborhood—taking into consideration age, gender, and ethnic background.

The project team contacted the 22 potential steering committee members about the first steering committee meeting over the phone, or by an in-person visit the day of the meeting. Although many committee members were recruited through canvassing, some were also found through recommendations from other community groups, or through the project team's presentation about the project at Cudahy City

The project team receives help in canvassing from interested residents.

Council. In one instance, a committee member became involved when she showed up at the first meeting after noticing signs at Cudahy Park.

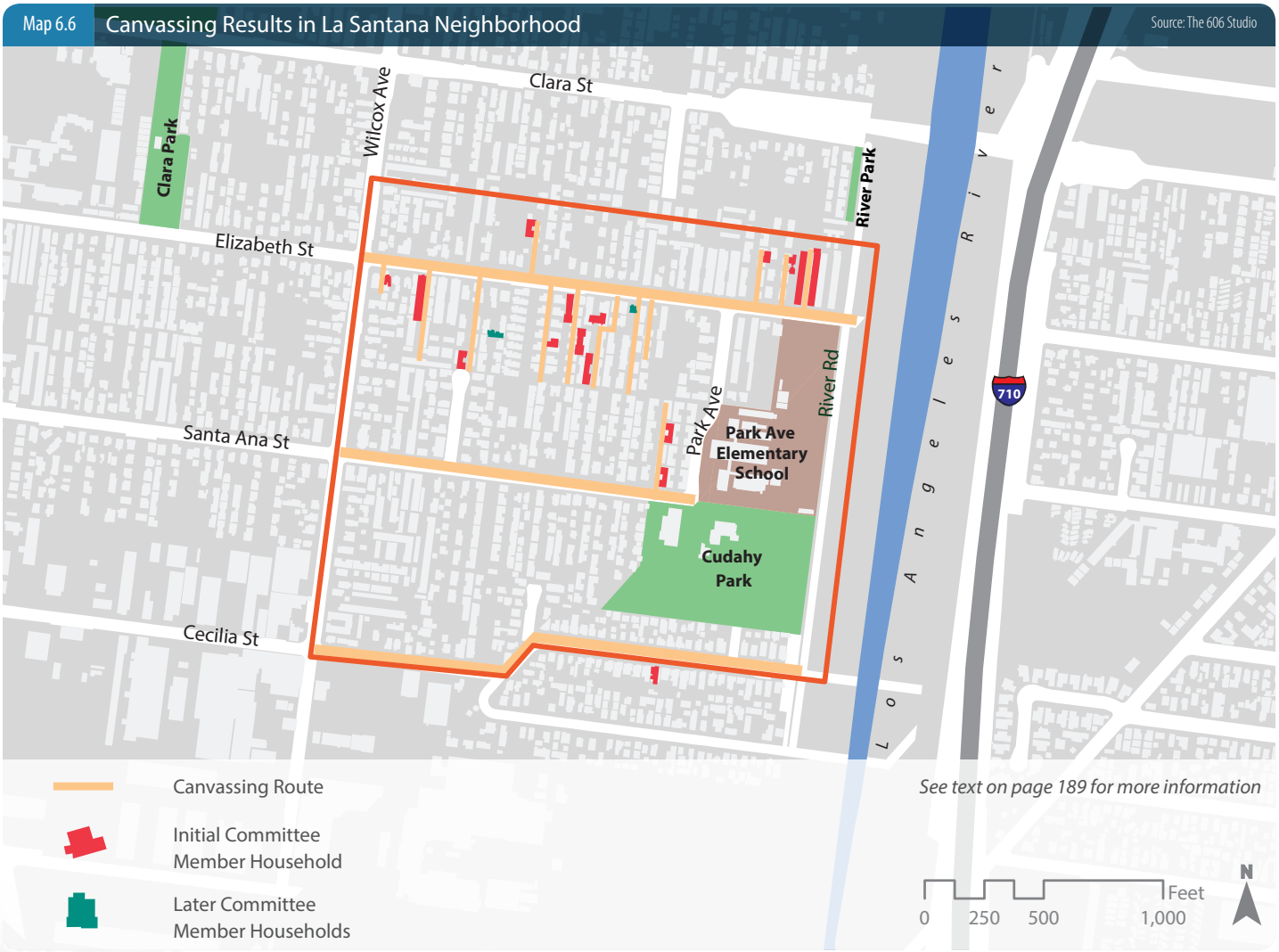
The first steering committee meeting took place on December 5, 2015 and was attended by six committee members. During the meeting, the project team facilitated an open discussion which consisted of a 'getting to know you' exercise, introduced the goals of the project, reiterated its participatory nature, and discussed concerns about the neighborhood. The project team then conducted a cognitive mapping exercise, in which neighbors drew a map of their neighborhood from memory and identified important sites. This was both a way to collect inventory and acted as a training exercise for the committee.

The composition of the steering committee shifted as the project progressed, with some members dropping off and others joining after being recruited by other committee members. Ultimately, between six and eight steering committee members remained active throughout the process, attending meetings, advocating for the project with city staff, and contributing to the design.

The distribution of these steering committee members was initially concentrated mainly in the northern portion of the neighborhood, where canvassing was most successful (see Map 6.6). However, throughout the subsequent design phases, and during the build phase in particular, participation in the project more accurately represented the neighborhood.

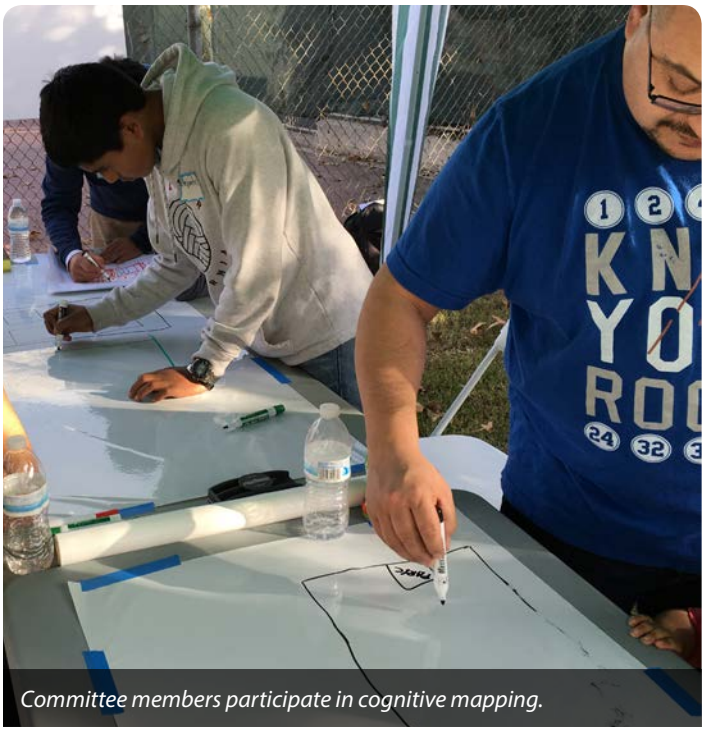
Map 6.6 Canvassing Results in La Santana Neighborhood

Source: The 606 Studio



See text on page 189 for more information

The project team and committee members participate in a site selection walk of the neighborhood.



Committee members participate in cognitive mapping.

The project team and committee members discuss the neighborhood.

Site Selection

On January 16, 2016 the project team and five steering committee members went on a site selection walk of the neighborhood. During the walk, the project team used open discussion and a mapping activity to foster a dialogue about the proximity of potential sites to areas that the committee felt were unsafe or undesirable. The committee also gave feedback on locations that had previously been selected by the project team and were given the opportunity to suggest additional locations. This activity helped the committee members think about the spatial characteristics of their neighborhood and provided training to the committee to help lead the larger, community-wide site walk later that month. Committee members agreed to talk to their neighbors and hand out flyers to get the word out for the event.

Booklets were used as an evaluative tool, providing committee members with inventory information and an overview of each potential site.

The community-wide site selection walk took place on January 30 and was attended by 25 community members. The walk was conducted in four separate groups, with a committee member and student co-leading each group. During the walk, students and committee members led an open discussion of site characteristics, noting opportunities and constraints. Community members participated in a mapping activity, in which they placed yellow stickers on a map of their neighborhood on sites they saw as desirable. As a result of the site walk, 13 potential sites were identified (see image below). The project team then facilitated a comparative exercise in which community members identified the pros and cons of the 13 potential sites.

The following week, the project team met with six steering committee members in a committee member's garage. The project team provided the committee with a booklet (see Appendix C.4), containing a map and photos of each of the 13 potential sites. After a brief open discussion, the committee members

The steering committee referenced a large print-out of this site selection map to evaluate site choices.

participated in a ranking exercise using dotmocracy in order to narrow down the list of 13 sites to five. The project team then facilitated a comparative exercise listing pros and cons of each site followed by another dotmocracy exercise. This resulted in two chosen sites and two alternate sites. The first site (#13 on previous page), a paved area outside the neighborhood meat market at the intersection of Santa Ana Street and Wilcox Avenue, was chosen because of its central location in the neighborhood, halfway between Atlantic Avenue (a major thoroughfare in the community), and the Los Angeles River, in addition to being a place residents use often. The site is also next to the bus stop, closest to the neighborhood.

The second site (#7 on previous page) chosen by the committee is across the street from Park Avenue Elementary School on Park Avenue, in close proximity to Cudahy Park. It is a triangular-shaped empty lot where community members often stand to wait for their children to be let out of school. The two other sites were ranked lower and were selected as alternates, including Site #3 at the entrance to the river bike path and Site #4, a residential lot extension (see Figure 6.1).

Committee members rank potential project sites using dotmocracy.

Figure 6.2 Top Sites and Alternatives

Site #13
Carniceria
(Santa Ana Street and Wilcox Avenue)

Site #7
Lot across from Park Avenue Elementary

Site #3
River Entrance
(River Road)

Site #4
Extension of residential lot
(Elizabeth Street)

The project team discussed how to get permission from the various site owners. One member agreed to discuss the project with the owner of the carniceria. Another committee member, who sat on the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) board for the elementary school, volunteered to discuss the project with the principal to find out school how to gain permission to use the site.

The team created an informational brochure for each of the stakeholders, which included the project background and events leading up to site selection. Committee members then contacted the Principal of the elementary school who was interested in the project but they were told they would need to bring the project to the school board which would take time. The project team and steering committee members met with the operator of the carniceria who leases the space from the property owner. After some negotiation, the carniceria operator and property owner both agreed to allow the project to move forward to the design phase. This agreement coincided with a hold on the operational license because of the requirement for six percent increase in property landscaping.

Meeting the city's conditions and the needs of the community members and the property owners was an ongoing and challenging process which took place simultaneously with the development and implementation of the project (see Design section).

The steering committee chose the Carniceria Milagro as their preferred project site due to its function as the only nearby market and because of its potential to become a much needed social and resting space halfway between Atlantic Avenue and the Los Angeles River.

Program

Many elements of site programming happened simultaneously with site selection. After the site walk on January 30, 2016 the project team facilitated a brainstorming session to determine what activities residents would like to engage in at each site. The project team posed questions such as what the community liked to do and how the sites could accommodate socialization, play, and relaxation. A list of program items was developed based on this session, and this list was incorporated into the subsequent steering committee meeting.

The project team and steering committee members met on March 6, 2016 at a committee member's residence to determine the final program for the top two site locations from the site selection phase. Committee members started with the list generated by the wider community and brainstormed additional programming items. Next, the project team facilitated a ranking activity using dotmocracy. The committee placed stickers on cards with the names of specific program items such as seating, trash cans, and places for bicycles. Students also introduced environmental components to the ranking list such as improving air and water quality, and explained how these kinds of interventions can be part of site design. The rankings resulted in a list of 13 different program items which were prioritized by number of votes. The results of the final program (see Figure 6.3) were evaluated using open discussion.

The community brainstorms project programming elements following a neighborhood site selection walk.

Steering committee members rank program elements using dotmocracy.

Figure 6.3 Program Priority (by votes)

Site #13: Carniceria

18	Shade	8	Improve Water Quality
16	Seating	7	Bicycle
11	Trees / Plants	6	Improve Air Quality
11	Art	6	Play Area
10	Lighting	5	Drought-Tolerant Plants
9	Trash Cans	4	Wildlife

Site #7: Across From Park Ave Elementary

18	Seating	7	Art
16	Shade	6	Improve Air Quality
13	Play Area	6	Drought-Tolerant Plants
10	Trees / Plants	5	Improve Water Quality
9	Lighting	5	Water Fountain
8	Trash Cans	3	Bicycle

Design

In order to prepare for the community design workshop, the project team and the steering committee met on February 20, 2016 at a committee member's residence. An open discussion provided an opportunity for the committee members to think about specific design interventions that aligned with the ranked program and how to integrate environmental benefits such as improving air and water quality. The project team then introduced a prototyping activity to the committee which included ready-made "pieces" representing trees, benches, and other design interventions that could be arranged on a base plan of the carniceria. The prototyping activity also included an open discussion for committee members to give their feedback about how the exercise could be improved before it was used with the larger community.

The design workshop, held at Clara Park Community Center on February 27, 2016, introduced the project to the community, with roughly 20 community members in attendance. Three committee members presented the project to the community, explaining the goals of the project, the process of selecting the carniceria as a location, and other events leading up to the workshop. As with all previous meetings, the workshop was held in both Spanish and English, with steering committee members providing translations.

After the project was introduced, the project team facilitated a mapping exercise which consisted of a collaborative site analysis, where elements such as noise, sun, wind, and accessibility were visually placed on a prepared site plan. Community members provided additional information about the site, which was added to the site analysis. The project team then reviewed the results of the program ranking exercises.

Next the project team discussed a number of design principles such as spatial proximity, prospect and refuge, and size relationships, using terminology that was clear to non-designers and in terms the community could contextualize. The project team then presented pre-made examples of 'good' and 'bad' site design, using the same ready-made pieces and geometric tangram shapes as a visual aid in explaining the design principles. The project team also introduced circular pieces

Committee members prototype the design charrette activity.

The community listens as a committee member introduces the project.

The project team reviews program elements with the community.

with symbology representing “water infiltration opportunities,” “habitat opportunities,” “art opportunities” and “bicycle parking opportunities” for the community to place onto their designs in places they felt were most appropriate.

Four tables were set up with base maps of the carniceria on each, with ready-made pieces such as benches, shrubs, plants, trees, and shade structures. Geometric tangram shapes with various textures were also included for participants to represent their own spatial features, as well as markers for free-form drawing. Community members worked together in groups and openly discussed their ideas, arranging pieces on the base map collaboratively. A post-design discussion allowed participants to present their designs and describe the relationship between design decisions and program. These pieces were eventually glued and taped to the prepared base plans to use in the next step in the design process.

The project team explains design principles.

The project team used visual aids to discuss design principles, incorporating the same ready-made pieces from the design workshop.

Over twenty community members worked in groups to design solutions for the site outside the neighborhood carniceria.

On March 5, 2016 the project team met with the steering committee with the purpose of synthesizing the designs of the community into a single design concept. Committee members were given copies of the four designs the community developed which were evaluated via open discussion. Then, using a blank base map, committee members placed colored sticky notes to block off areas for planting, seating, shade, and art. The project team facilitated the process by asking questions, such as: “Based on the community designs, where are the site boundaries? Which direction should seating face? Will there be a separation of uses? How can we create cohesion? Should shade come from trees or from structures? How can we incorporate art into the site?”

After the site was blocked out with sticky notes, the committee replaced them with ready-made elements while the project team facilitated an open discussion about design decisions. This resulted in a final synthesized design which the project team used to develop final plans. The project team also asked the committee about colors appropriate for the site, and the committee explained their preference for vibrant colors. The project team also facilitated an open discussion about plant characteristics and preferences, using visual examples. This information was used later to prepare color and plant options for the larger community.

On March 12, 2016 the project team held a community meeting in a steering committee member's garage. At the meeting, which was attended by 12 community members (including a member of the city council), the project team presented a digital version of the steering committee's synthesized base map and printed sheets with example images of possible site furniture, vegetation, and colors (see Appendix C.3). The team then facilitated an open discussion about the site elements while community members wrote their preferred options on the base map.

Based on the committee’s synthesized design and the community's site furnishing preferences, the project team independently

The steering committee works together to synthesize the community’s designs.

developed a final site plan, design details, and draft construction documents (see Figure 6.4 and Appendix C.10). Some of the details and decisions in this final design were made by the project team, without the direct input of the committee or community, due to their technical nature and the constraints of working within a limited budget. However, the major elements of the project's final design align closely with the community's vision.

On April 2, 2016 the project team held a community meeting at the site of the Carniceria to discuss final design details. At this meeting, which was attended by 13 community members (including the operators of the carniceria), the project team presented the final site plan with construction documents and renderings. Using painter's tape, the project team outlined all the major elements of the plan on the ground of the site to help community members better understand the scale of site furnishings. The project team facilitated a ranking exercise using dotmocracy for community members to select a color scheme for the site (see Appendix C.12).

The community notes site furnishing preferences on a base map.

Steering committee members helped lead an open discussion to get final consensus about colors. Then, the project team presented plant options for each planting area, and facilitated another ranking exercise using dotmocracy to choose plants (see Appendix C.13). Committee

Community members meet at the project site to discuss design details and rank vegetation options using dotmocracy.

The community discusses the final project design and ranks color options.

members again led an open discussion about why community members ranked certain plants highly. Community members indicated a strong preference for plants that are hardy, drought tolerant, easy to maintain, and colorful. Some plant choices had cultural or sentimental value. For example, one community member chose *Encelia californica* (California sunflower) because it reminded him of where he grew up in Mexico. He explained that because *Encelia* is also native to where he lives now, it represents both locations.

As the design process progressed, the project team presented to the Cudahy City Council and later to the Cudahy Planning Commission. The team and steering committee members also met individually with city planners and the city building inspector in order to meet the city's six percent landscaping requirement for the carniceria's parking area. Meeting this requirement was necessarily to grant the operators of the store full business license—a stipulation that was requested in exchange for allowing use of the site for the community's project. Complicating the agreement was the fact that the city chose not to consider the community's project as connected to the parking area, and thus it was ineligible to meet the six percent requirement.

After some deliberation, and several field observations of the parking lot's vehicular traffic patterns and spatial constraints, the project team and the city reached an agreement to remove existing asphalt in an area between the parking wheel stops and the carniceria entrance (see Figure 6.4). In order to preserve access,

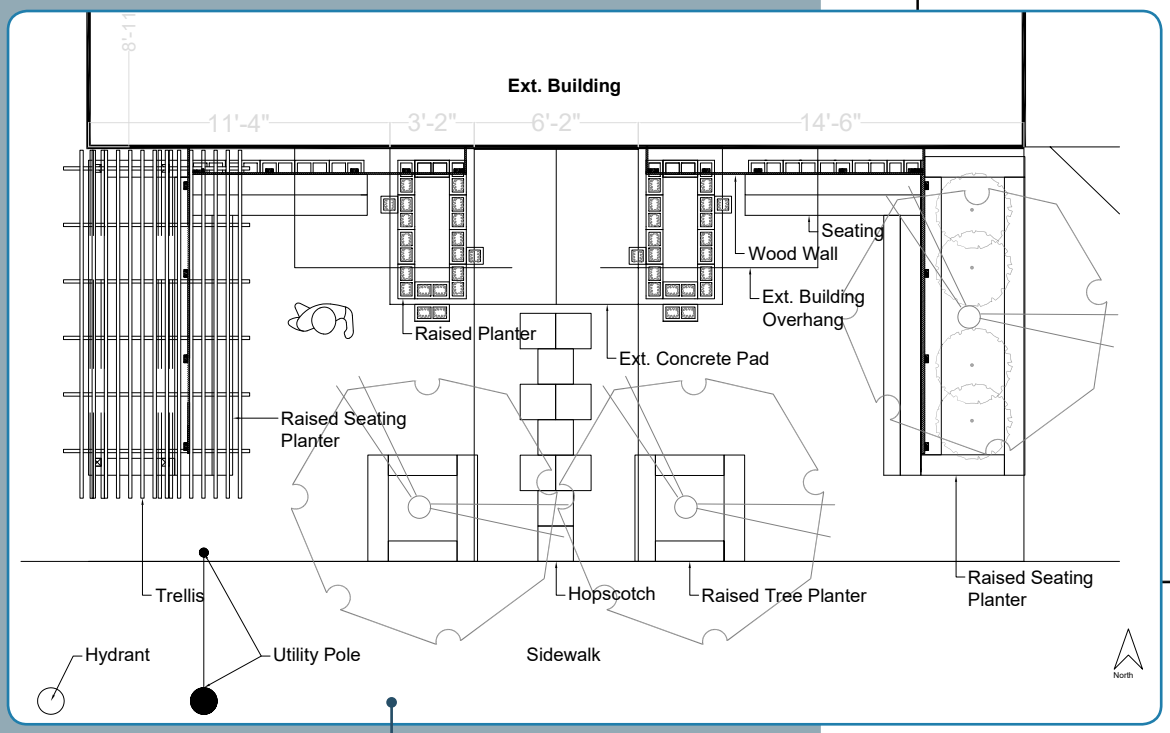
A team member presents the project to the Cudahy Planning Commission.

the project team chose to keep alterations largely limited to the ground plane. The use of infiltration trenches met the city's conditions, accommodated foot traffic, and increased stormwater permeability.

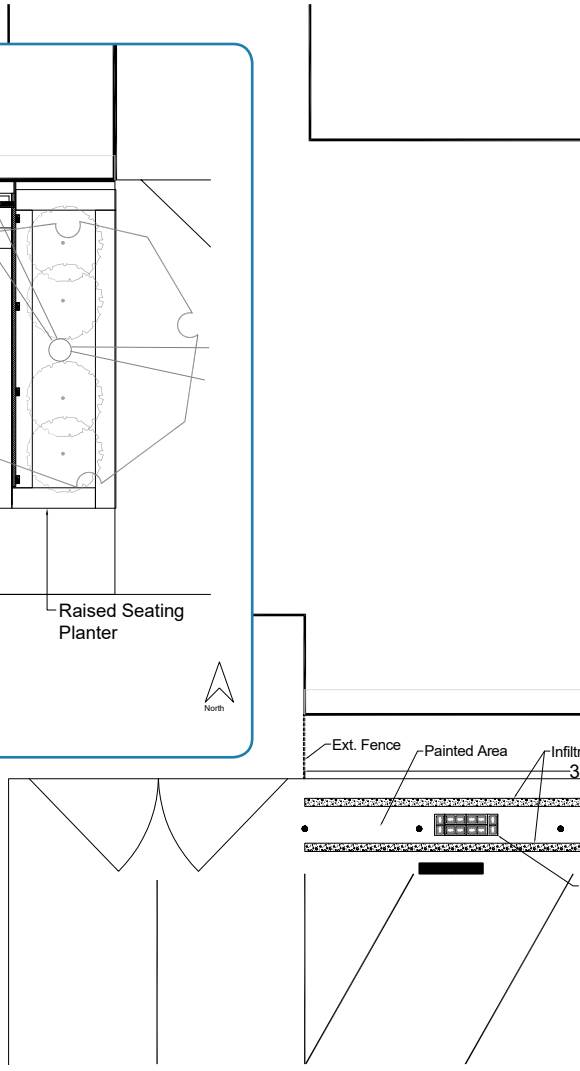
At the first design workshop, after being introduced to the idea of water capture, community members had expressed interest in improving water quality by collecting runoff from the carniceria roof. While this notion was not necessarily a high priority for the community compared to other desired programming, the agreement with the city ultimately helped introduce elements of stormwater capture to the project.

In order to meet city landscaping requirements, the project team proposed infiltration trenches in front of parking wheel stops.

Figure 6.4 Carniceria Site Plan and Details

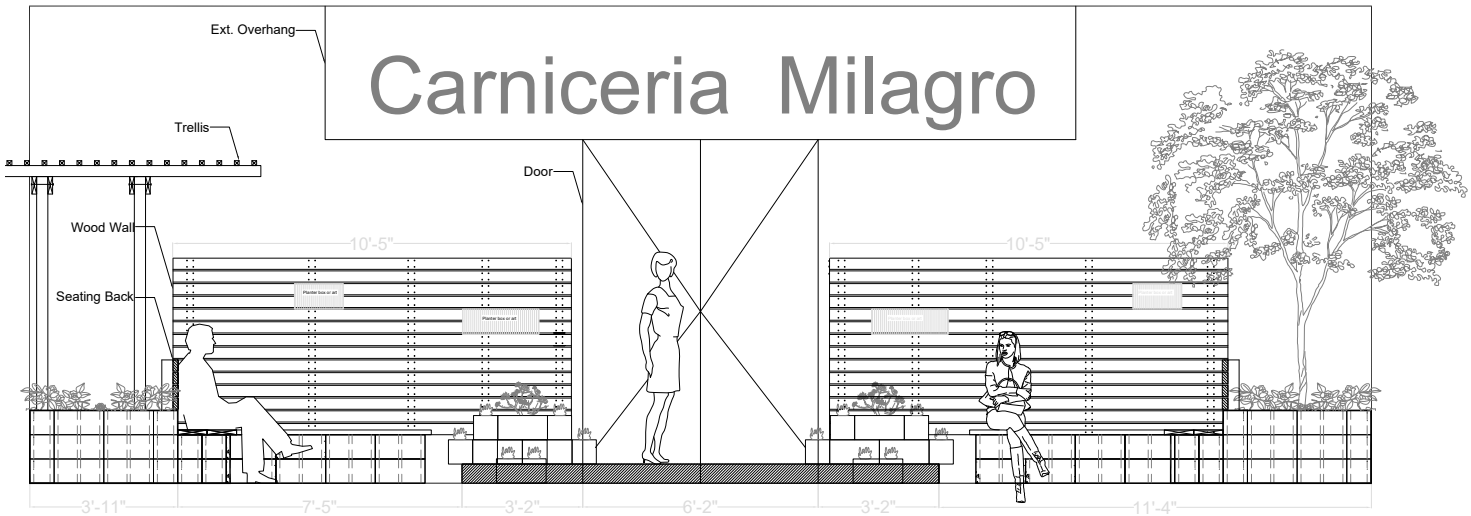


Plan view of the main community project space.

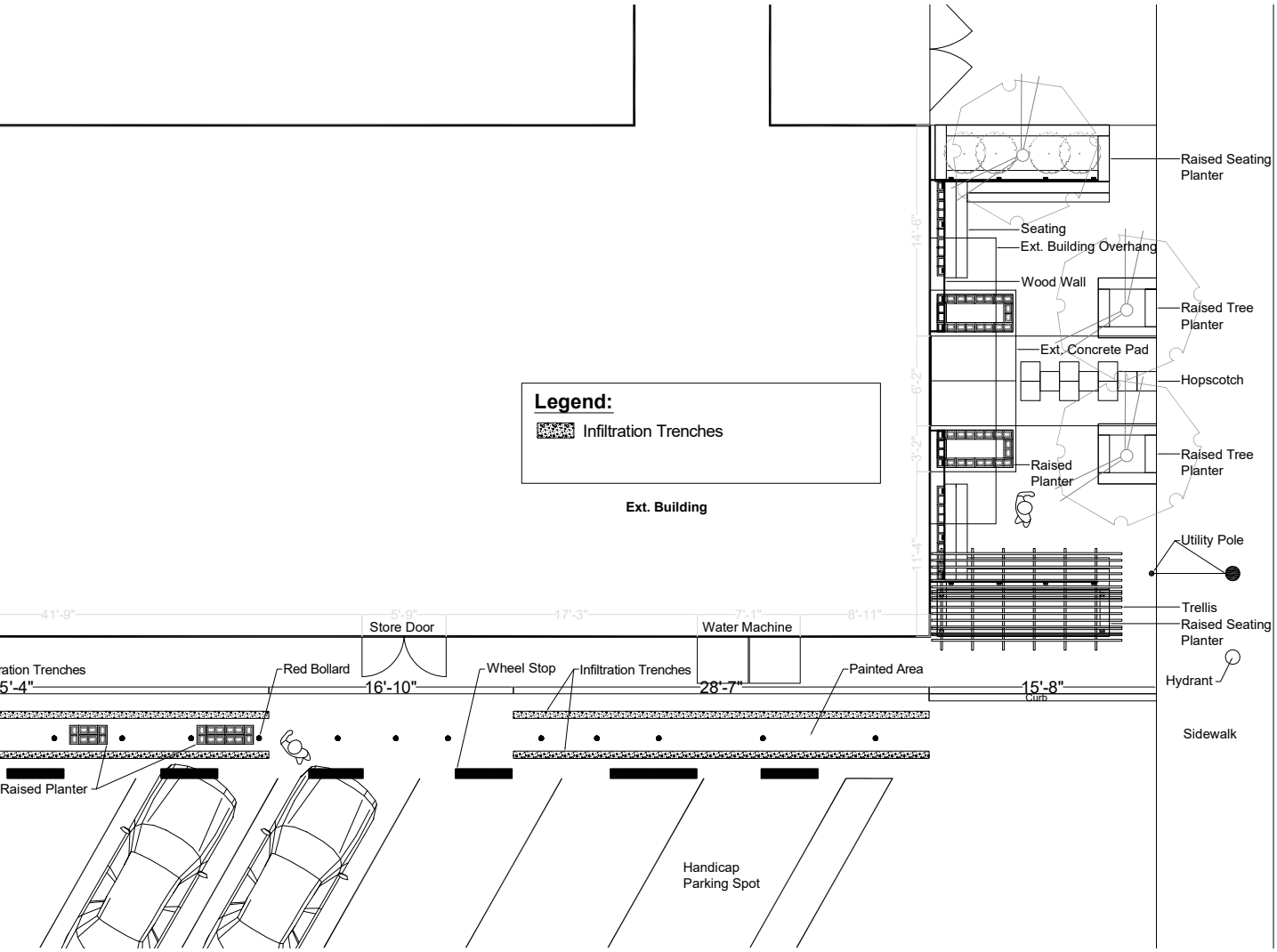


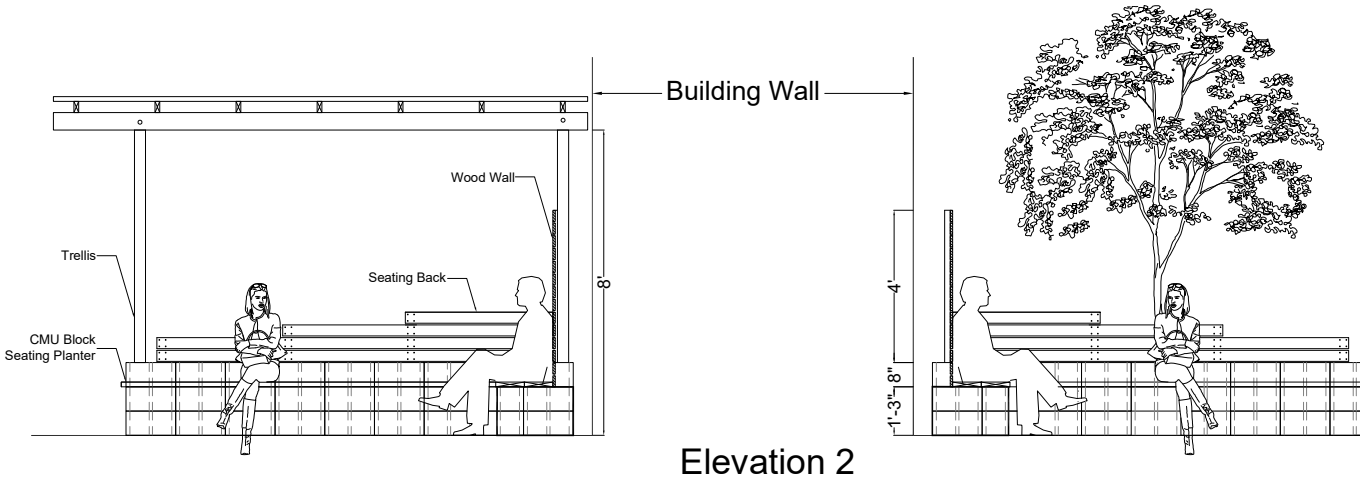
Plan view of entire project area, including parking lot improvements.

Elevations of main community project space.



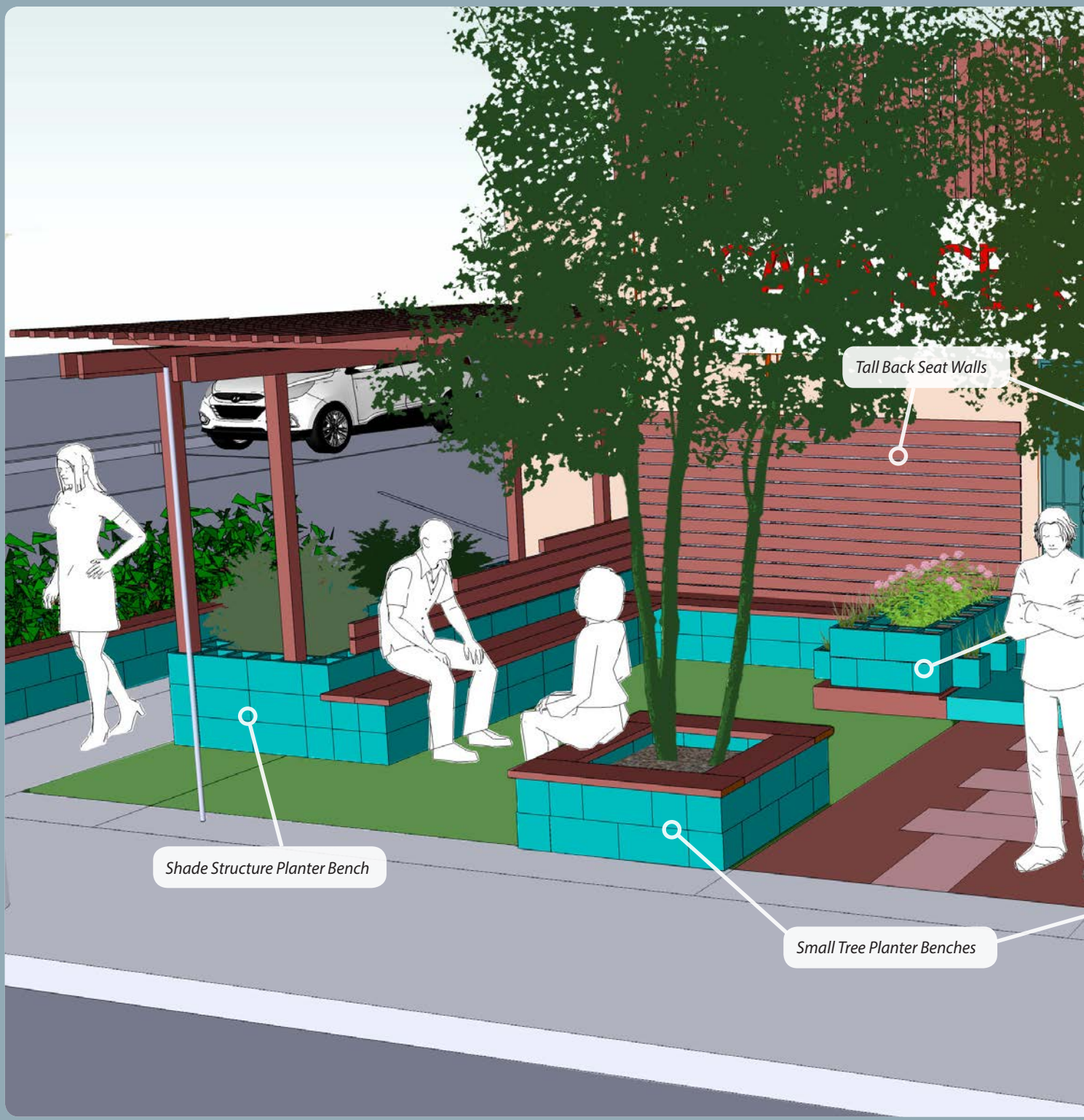
Elevation 1


Raised Seating Planter
Seating
Ext. Building Overhang
Wood Wall
Raised Tree Planter
Ext. Concrete Pad
Hopscotch
Raised Planter
Raised Tree Planter
Utility Pole
Trellis
Raised Seating Planter
Hydrant
Sidewalk
Legend:
Infiltration Trenches
Ext. Building
41'-9"
5'-9"
17'-3"
7'-1"
8'-11"
14'-6"
6'-2"
3'-2"
11'-4"
Store Door
Water Machine
ration Trenches
5'-4"
Red Bollard
16'-10"
Wheel Stop
Infiltration Trenches
28'-7"
Painted Area
15'-8"
Curb
Raised Planter
Handicap Parking Spot


Building Wall
Wood Wall
Trellis
Seating Back
8'
CMU Block Seating Planter
4'
1'-3"-8"

Elevation 2

Figure 6.5 Plaza Milagro Perspective



Perspective of the main community project space, looking north.

As the design phase came to a close, the project team prepared to construct the site with the community. Due to its location outside of the Carniceria Milagro, and the fact that the project itself was seen as a 'miracle' for the neighborhood, the community named the site Plaza Milagro. The team had a budget of $3000 with which to buy construction materials, work through the logistics of staging each work day, and buy and transport thousands of pounds of materials to the site. Because the project team had no prior construction experience, this presented an additional challenge. However, many of these problems were overcome with the advice and guidance of community members.

Site Preparation and Painting

The first two work days revealed how construction can energize a community and act as a recruiting tool. On the first day, the project team and three committee members pulled weeds, scraped old paint and dried-on gum, and swept the site. The team also began painting the concrete according to colors previously chosen by the community. On the second day, the project team and several community members continued to paint the site. As the painting progressed, curious shoppers at the Carniceria stopped and asked about the project—some of whom were interested in participating in future events. One passerby was so excited about the project, he joined in and helped paint several areas.

After painting, to celebrate the first build weekend, the community held a barbecue on site. The Carniceria operators came out and contributed meat and drinks. At the barbecue, the project team and community discussed the logistics of upcoming work days.

The community celebrates the project kick-off.

As the first coat of paint dries, the community gathers in the shade.

The project team and community prepares and paints the site.

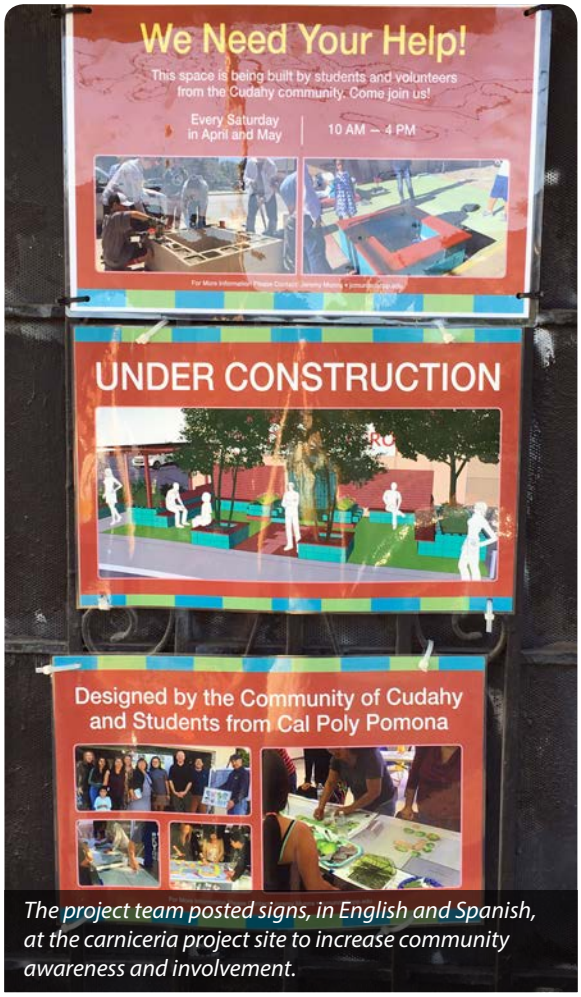
The project team and community discuss next steps after completing the two tree planter benches.

Building the Small Tree Planter Benches

The following weekend, the project team and community constructed two tree planter benches. Because these planters were essentially smaller versions of the other major site elements, these work days served as a way for both the team and community to work through construction challenges together and better prepare for work days moving forward.

Working with a sledgehammer to break existing concrete, the team created holes inside the perimeter of each tree planter and then worked with the community to assemble the planters, glue concrete blocks together, and fill them with wood posts and concrete. A community member with construction experience took charge of mixing the concrete, demonstrating techniques, and directing clean-up. Other community members helped fill in the holes of the concrete blocks and paint the wood for the seating. A few community members took charge of preparing food and drinks for those who were working.

Allowing time for the concrete to set, the project team returned the next day to attach the wood seating. One community member helped lead the effort of screwing in the wood boards and filling them with putty before the community painted a second coat on the seating surface. A resident living across the street from the site stopped by and provided pizzas to show his appreciation and support.



The project team posted signs, in English and Spanish, at the carniceria project site to increase community awareness and involvement.

The project team and community construct the tree planter benches.

The project team rests on the newly completed large tree planter bench after delivering supplies for the next work day.

Building the Large Tree Planter Bench

With the success of the first two tree planter benches, the project team and community were better prepared for the more challenging large tree planter bench, back wall, and porch planter which was constructed over two consecutive work days.

A community member attaches the back seat wall. The involvement of community members with construction experience was vital to the success of the project.

Similar to the previous planters, the project team and community made a hole in the concrete for the tree roots and then laid out concrete blocks and glued them together with concrete adhesive. More challenging was the installation of posts in the tall back seat walls, where an underpowered hammer drill initially stalled installation but, with the help of two community members, the posts were eventually correctly set, covered with concrete block, and filled with concrete for additional support. After leaving the concrete to set overnight, the project team and community returned the next day to attach the wood seating surfaces and backs, sand the wood, and paint. Again, where complicated cuts in the wood presented challenges, a community member with construction experience resolved the problem.

Community participation was strong on both work days. For example, on the second work day, an entire youth soccer team and their coach came to help. This high level of participation was both beneficial and challenging, as the team worked to coordinate various tasks on a crowded construction site and ensure all community members had something to do. Steering committee members who were comfortable with certain jobs from previous work days, such as mixing concrete, often stepped in and led these efforts.

The mayor and city council members also spent a few hours helping and delivering food. Another community member cooked a large meal and the Carniceria operators provided meat and drinks for those working.

Community members of all ages help construct the large tree planter bench.

Building the Shade Structure Planter Bench

The shade structure planter bench, on the opposite end of the site from the large tree planter bench, was the most complicated site element and took five work days (two weekends) to complete. In preparation for building with the wider community, the project team held a preparation work day with just three community members to drill and install six posts for the shade structure and tall back seat wall. On previous work days, this task had proven difficult and held up some of the construction. The following day, the project team and the community constructed the concrete portion of the shade structure planter bench. Because of a sharp grade change in one corner of the site, the project team also used metal shims and mortar to level the concrete blocks consistently across the planter.

On the following weekend, the project team delivered additional supplies and, with the help of several community members, built the back seating wall, porch planter, attached seat boards to the concrete blocks, cut and constructed the wood seat backs and wood planter caps, and bolted the shade structure joists to the posts. Finally, on the following day, the project team constructed the top of the shade structure, attached it, and touched up paint.

Participation numbers were high but varied by work day, with the most involvement on Saturdays—including visits from the city council, food donated by the community and local businesses, and expressions of enthusiasm and appreciation from patrons of the Carniceria. Although work days often lasted 12 hours, many community members would stay until the end, sharing a meal with the project team on site after the sun had set.

The Mayor of Cudahy, a strong supporter of the project, also invited two members of Gehry Partners (who were facilitating a lower LA River planning meeting nearby) to review the project.

The project team and community attach the shade structure beams.

The project team and community overcome construction challenges while building the shade structure planter bench.

Teenage volunteers rest on the bench planters after a long planting day.

Planting

With the major construction tasks complete, the project team and community planted trees, shrubs, succulents, and vines over the course of two work days. To prepare for planting, the project team first filled the planters with two truck loads of free soil from a nearby cemetery. The team amended the soil with another truck load of free compost and mulch from the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation. In order to ensure the newly planted trees would obtain enough water to encourage deep root growth, the project team also constructed watering pipes by drilling holes into ABS plastic pipes, filling them with gravel, and capping them with drainage grates (see photo on right).

With the help of community members, the project team then planted the site with wholesale and donated plants. Crepe myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*) were planted in the two small tree planter benches. A Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*) was planted in the larger tree planter bench. The team and community filled in the large tree planter with drought tolerant plants, including bush snapdragon (*Galvezia speciosa*), sandhill sage (*Artemisia pycnocephala*), and assorted salvia plants.

The team and community planted the shade structure planter with violet trumpet vine (*Clytostoma callistegioides*), bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spp.*), bird of paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*), and bush snapdragon (*Galvezia speciosa*).

The project team added gravel to the back porch planters for drainage and mixed it into the soil. Each exposed concrete block hole was planted with assorted succulents, and the center was planted with Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos flavidus*). Later, community members supplemented the planters with plants from their home gardens, including Plumeria (*Plumeria spp.*)

Logistically, the planting work days were less chaotic than previous work days, providing an opportunity for the project team and community to discuss planting strategies, care, and maintenance. The project team also prepared a maintenance guide and distributed it to the steering committee and the Carniceria operators to help ensure ongoing maintenance.

A tree watering pipe can help to encourage deeper root growth.

The project team and community work together to plant the site.

Final Plaza Details

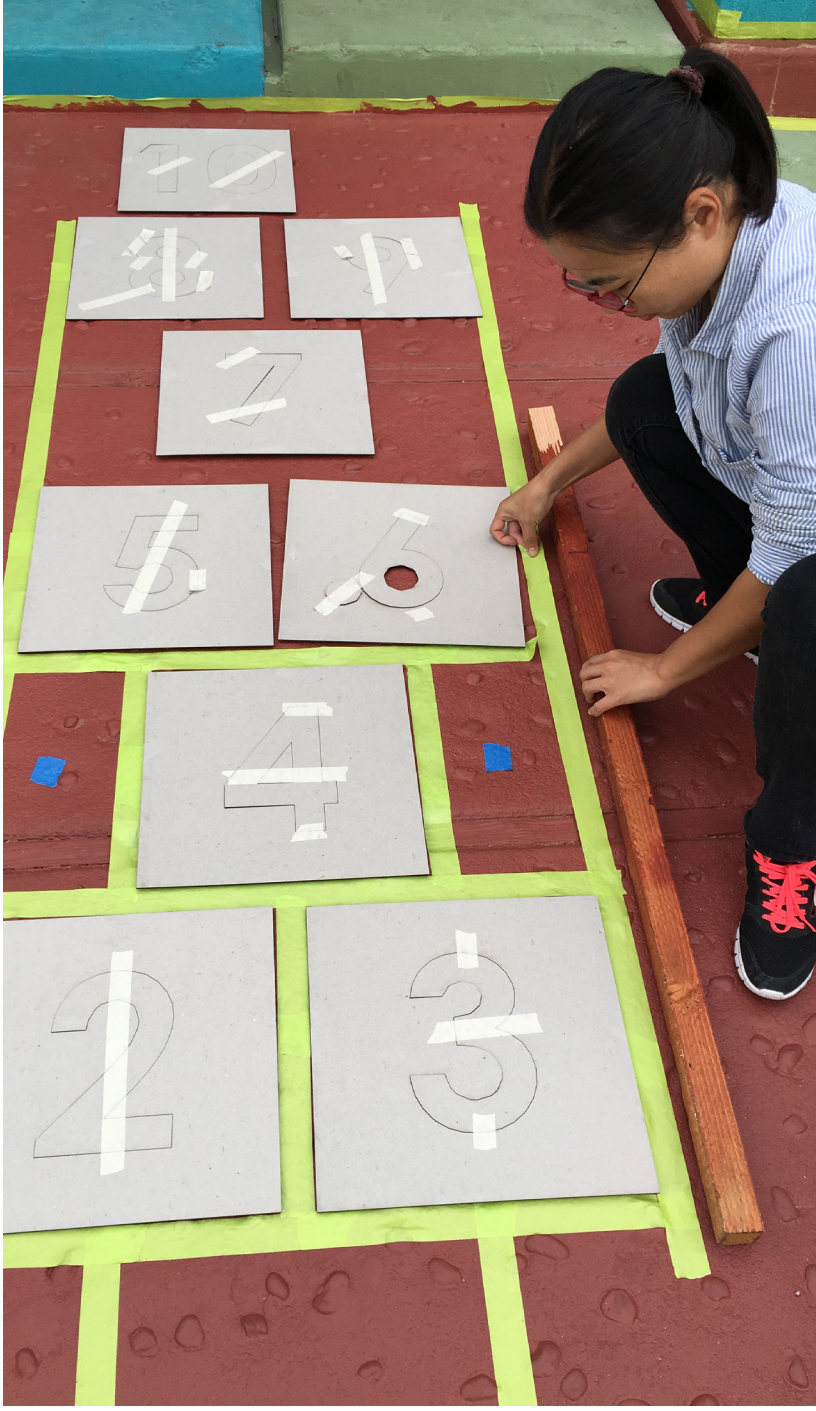
Three work days were dedicated to repairs, final painting, and other details. Because the back seat wall was offset from the building structure, it was necessary to build trash screens, constructed from plywood and wire mesh, to keep out vermin and prevent the public from throwing trash in this difficult to access area. The team and community then patched cracks in the concrete and filled gaps in the wood seating area before covering every surface with a final coat of paint.

Using stencils, the project team painted hopscotch squares in the center of the site. This was a detail the community had asked for early on in order to make the site more child-friendly.

With input from the community, the project team created signs and attached them to the tall back seat walls. The signs indicate that the project was designed and built by the community and lists the names of key volunteers. It's the hope of the project team and community that the presence of this information will discourage vandalism. The site location had been regularly vandalized in the past but not since project construction began. By contrast, areas of the city directly surrounding the site have continued to be vandalized.

Children play on the plaza hopscotch.

Front view of Plaza Milagro, after a final coat of paint.



The community and project team complete final construction details.

Building the Infiltration Area

The city required the project team to increase the landscaping to six percent in the parking area (see Section 6.4: Design). The design of this space was less community driven than Plaza Milagro, since the area was not included in the community design process. The project team independently came up with a solution, presented it to the city, and refined it with some community input. However, several community members participated in the construction of this space.

To create the infiltration trenches, the project team rented a walk-behind concrete saw and cut out four long strips of asphalt in the area behind the parking wheel stops. The team then filled the trenches with gravel and painted the asphalt between them in order to create a visual signal for pedestrians that the ground plane had changed. The project team and community also constructed small planters in the same style of the Plaza Milagro space and planted them with ground cover plants.

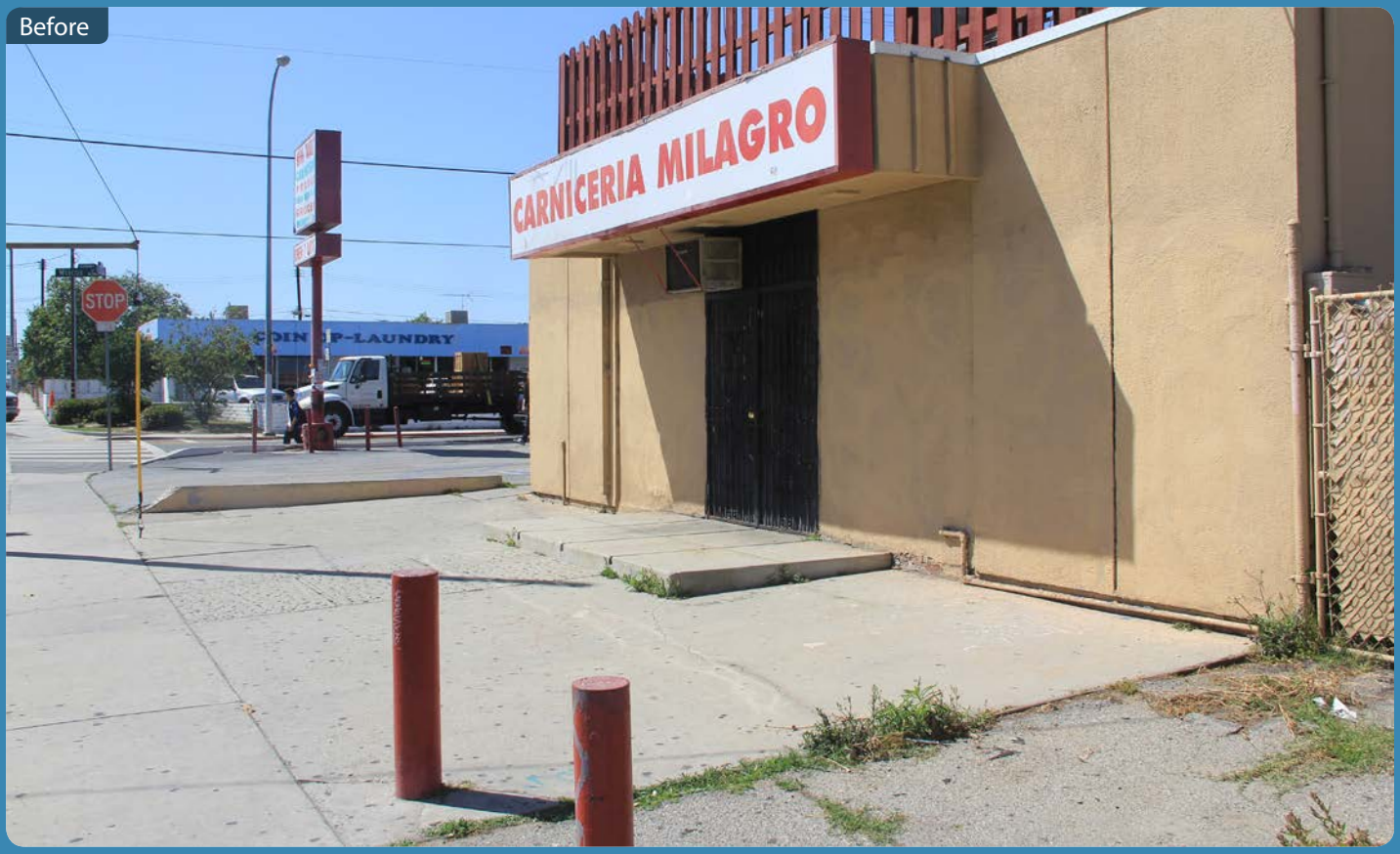
The project team and community plant drought-tolerant ground cover between the infiltration trenches.

Community members paint the area in between infiltration trenches.

Using a walk-behind saw, the project team and community construct infiltration trenches.

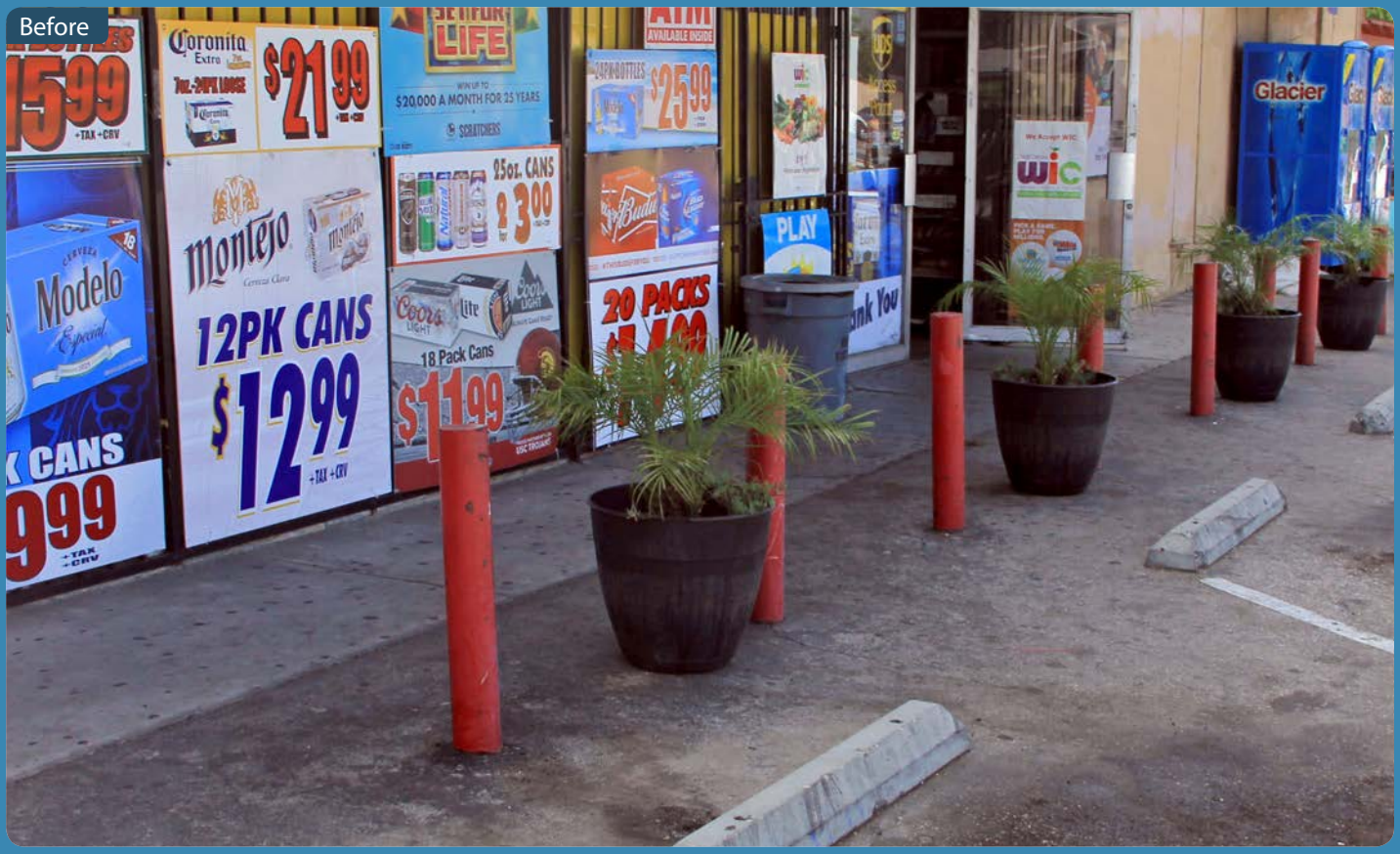
Figure 6.6 Plaza Milagro: Before and After

Before



After

Figure 6.6 Plaza Milagro: Before and After


Before
Coronita Extra
$21.99
LIFE
$20,000 A MONTH FOR 25 YEARS
SCRATCHERS
ATM
AVAILABLE INSIDE
$25.99
25oz. CANS
$3.00
Montejo
12PK CANS
$12.99
+TAX +CRV
Modelo Especial
Coors Light
18 Pack Cans
$11.99
20 PACKS
PLAY
wic
Glacier
Thank You

After
Visit att.com/affordable
for complete information and to apply
12PK
BOTTLES
$15.99
Modelo
Montejo
12PK CANS
$12.99
$3.00
PLAY

FUTURE PLANS FOR LA SANTANA

6.6

The process of designing and building Plaza Milagro successfully increased community interest, organizational capacity, and support for additional projects in the neighborhood. A major goal of the 606 Studio's participatory process is to harness this increased community capacity into larger, more impactful projects moving forward.

A Long-Term Project

During the site selection and programming phases of the participatory design process, the community chose an additional location for a community design project. The site, located across from Park Avenue Elementary School, was previously discussed in Section 6.4. Although the project team did not have sufficient time or resources to develop and build the site with the community, they set plans in motion to implement this larger project within a few years.

Project Purpose

The site for the long-term project is the lot across from Park Avenue Elementary School, selected because residents of La Santana indicated that they would like the site to become a place to gather and wait for their children to get out of school. They expressed a desire for seating, shade, and places for young children to play.

The project team also discussed the possibility of creating a connection with the Los Angeles River, which is a block away, and introduced the possibility of including environmental benefits, such as water capture and additional wildlife habitat. Residents ranked these elements highly during the programming phase (see Table 6.3).

Partner Organization

To ensure that the community's vision for the Park Avenue site could be realized moving forward, the project team set up a partnership between the community and the organization From Lot to Spot (FLTS). FLTS was founded in 2007 to address the lack of accessible, quality green space in low income neighborhoods. FLTS's approach involves grassroots community engagement to ensure disadvantaged communities have a voice in developing healthy spaces in their neighborhoods. The project team saw the potential for a partnership early on, having first interviewed FLTS about their work in the city (see Section 6.2), and kept FLTS informed of what was happening with the Carniceria project throughout the design and build phases.

In collaboration with FLTS, the project team is reaching out to the Los Angeles Unified School District, which owns the Park Avenue Elementary parcel for permission to develop the location.

The project team and steering committee review the Park Ave Elementary site during a site selection walk.

The project team reviews plans with From Lot to Spot.

Parents, on foot and in cars, pass the Park Avenue Elementary site as they collect their children from school.

In completing the design-build project, the project team was faced with the challenging reality of building a somewhat large and complicated project with little to no previous construction experience. Given these constraints, the team responded by planning a detailed build process which carefully considered the logistics of each step. One example of this was the transportation and storing of the thousands of pounds of CMU block and concrete mix, which took careful planning and staging to accomplish while relying on vehicles from friends and family that could carry heavy loads. Though the team's lack of experience was at times an obstacle, it also allowed for increased collaboration with steering committee and community members who stepped up to take lead roles where they had expertise.

Working in the City of Cudahy provided its own set of challenges for the team. Because of Cudahy's troubled recent history (see Section 6.3), city staff was especially reluctant to accommodate requests that didn't adhere to their strict interpretation of city policy. For example, many requests to use the local city community center as a meeting space were denied because of policies requiring outside (non-city) groups to be charged use fees. Further, despite the large community value and additional green space the project offered, the city would not count the plaza as meeting the six percent increase in landscaping for the carniceria grocery operators to be granted a full business license. Still, throughout the process, the community were advocates for the project. They helped the team when dealing with the city and jumped right into construction—working long days, helping transport materials, providing food, and reaching out to other community members to become involved.

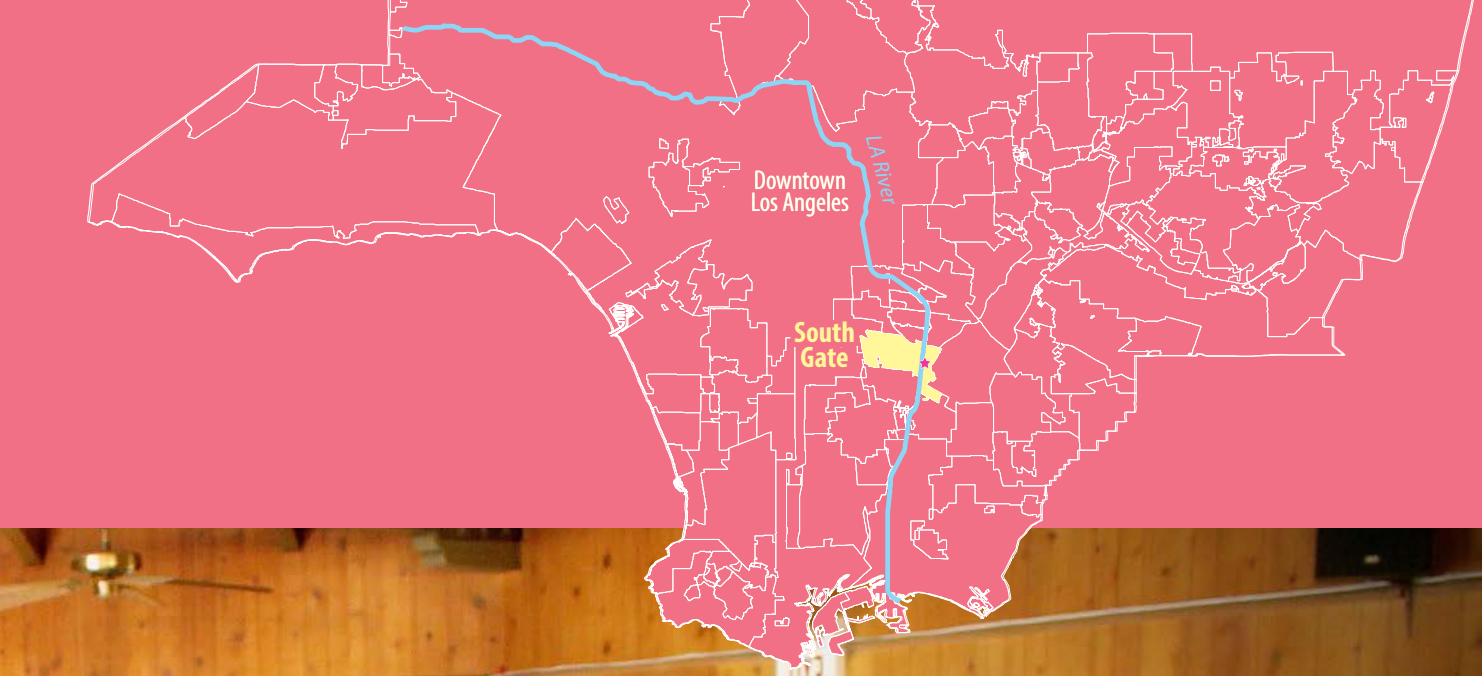
The collaboration that allowed Plaza Milagro to be built in Cudahy brought together a community and resulted in a vibrant public space as well as improved water quality and reduced urban heat island effect. In the end, the project also facilitated the acquisition of a business license, providing economic benefits as well.

CAL POLY
POMONA

THUNDERBIRD VILLA NEIGHBORHOOD

CITY OF SOUTH GATE, CALIFORNIA

Community members present their conceptual designs during a workshop.


Downtown
Los Angeles
LA River
South
Gate

Thunderbird Villa is an island between the Los Angeles River and the I-710 freeway

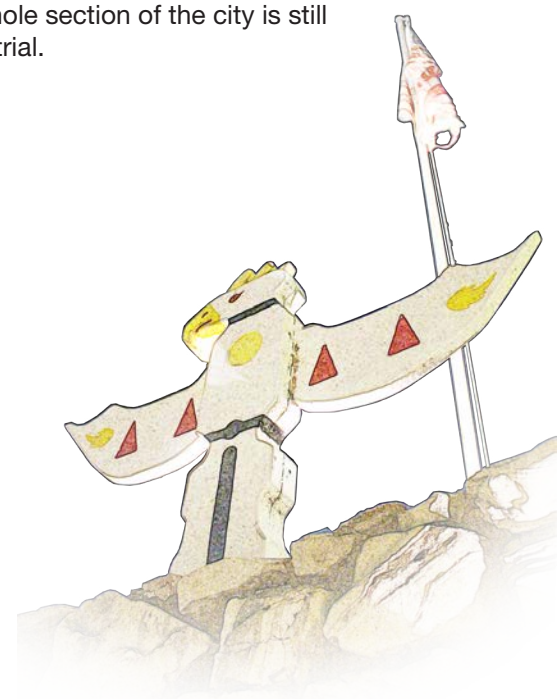
WHERE IS THUNDERBIRD VILLA?

7.1

The City of South Gate, California is located in southern Los Angeles County along the Los Angeles River. About 7 miles south of downtown Los Angeles, South Gate is set between the cities of Los Angeles and Downey to the east and west, and Cudahy and Paramount to the north and south. The Los Angeles River divides the city, with a significant portion of the city on the west side of the river. The project neighborhood, Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park, is on the eastern bank of the river, in a primarily industrial neighborhood. Built in 1965, Thunderbird Villa is physically segregated from the rest of the city by the Los Angeles River and high tension power lines to the west, and the I-710 freeway to the east, with only one access via a small tunnel under the freeway.

Thunderbird Villa is a unique community within the City of South Gate. A restricted community, only residents over 55 years of age may own homes there. Due to its geographical location, the community has thrived in some ways, while it has struggled in others. The Thunderbird Villa community is an island of well kept homes situated adjacent to the Los Angeles River and tucked in-between two sizable vacant parcels of land. There is a strong sense of community and camaraderie among the residents, and many signs of care in the landscape. The neighbors take pride in their front yards and the neighborhood has strong curb appeal.

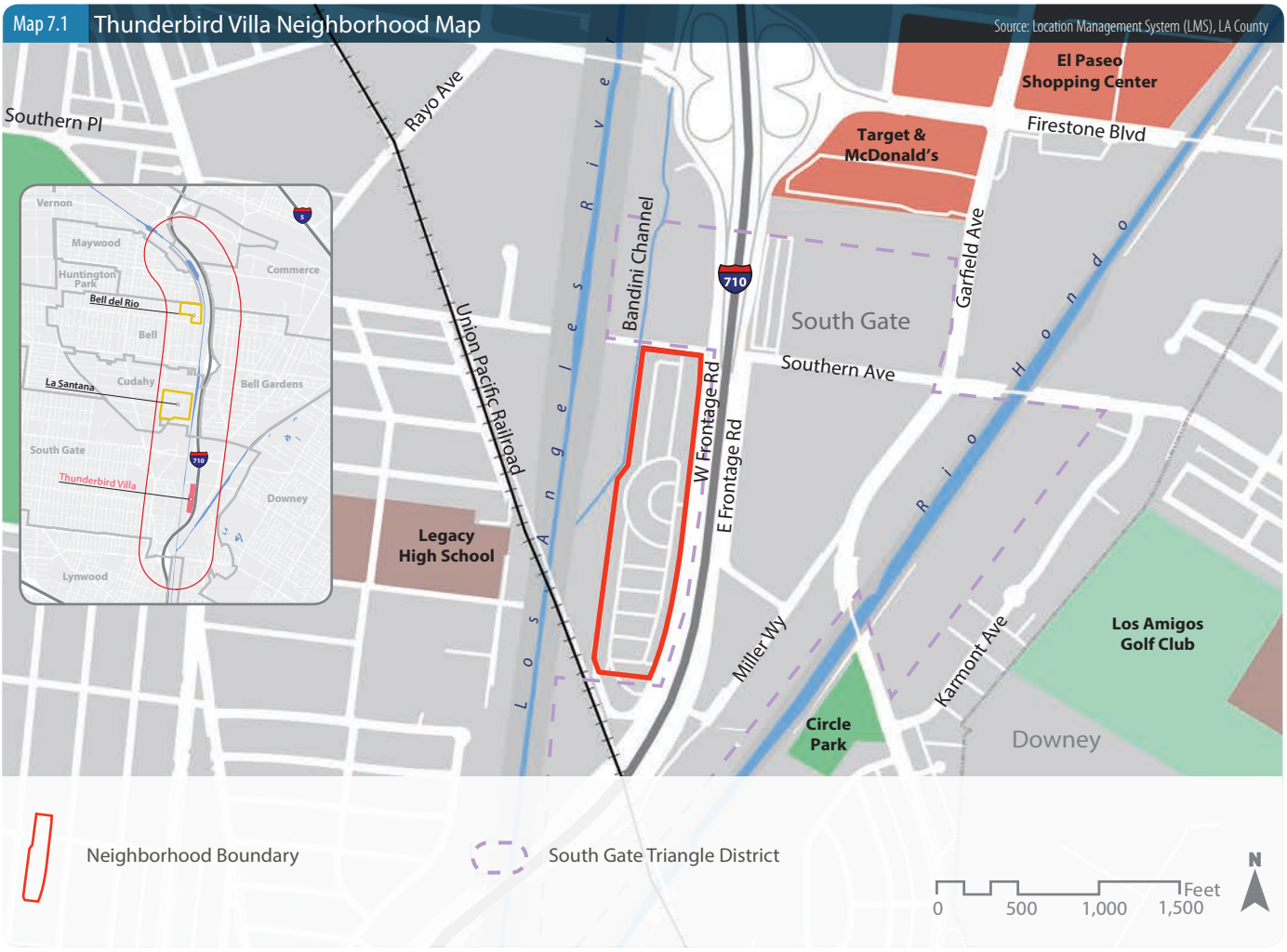
Although the residents live directly adjacent to the Los Angeles River, they cannot access it directly and with ease. There is only one entrance to the community through an underpass beneath the I-710 freeway just south of the community. The residents live in an area devoid of a park or a public open space area because the whole section of the city is still zoned as industrial.



The 240-unit mobile home park is located adjacent to the South Gate Triangle District, a large industrial area.

Map 7.1 Thunderbird Villa Neighborhood Map

Source: Location Management System (LMS), LA County



Introduction

To begin the community improvement project, the team identified a variety of questions which would require the use of the following methods during the project: GIS, data mining, interviews, canvassing, steering committee meetings, community meetings, site selection walks, design workshops, and work days (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2). The questions consisted of:

- Who lives in this neighborhood?
- What makes this neighborhood distinct?
- What are the key cultural/social characteristics of the neighborhood?
- How can this neighborhood be improved?
- What is the political context of the neighborhood?
- How can the community be improved by this project?
- Where should the community improvement project be located?
- What will the community improvement project look like?

GIS

GIS data was analyzed and created using a multitude of approaches. Participatory mapping exercises were combined with GIS techniques to create maps demonstrating residents' perceptions of local landmarks, safety, common walking routes, and their favorite neighborhood locations. Data from public sources as well as data mining was used to create maps of future project locations, open available space, and land use types within walking distance of the neighborhood. Google Maps was employed to generate estimated walking times from the community to key destinations. The team also utilized field observation to map neighborhood safety elements, such as the presence of security cameras and locked access points.

Data Mining

The project team used data mining to gain a better understanding of the project neighborhood (see Section 1.4).

Field Observation

The project team used field observation to document the project neighborhood (see Section 1.4).

Interviews

The project team used interviews to gather information about the project neighborhood and its relationship to South Gate, the Los Angeles River, and the broader region (see Section 1.4). These interviews engaged local officials and other interested organizations currently working in the area around Thunderbird Villa. During interviews, the students hoped to uncover expert knowledge. Some of the questions that were asked included:

- What is your relationship with the South Gate municipal government? Are you familiar with Thunderbird Villa?
- What is your experience working with city officials from the City of South Gate?
- What are your previous/current neighborhood projects, and what do they look like?
- Who are the key actors in the community? What other projects are occurring locally that we should be aware of?
- Who are the key players in the community and how does the community relate to the city and other governmental organizations?
- Do you have suggestions about managing a participatory design project in South Gate?
- Do you have recommendations for other organizations that focus on neighborhood improvement?
- Do you know anyone from the neighborhood who might like to be involved in this project?
- Do you have experience working on secondary-use open space projects using power line right-of-ways?
- What is the future of alternative transportation in South Gate and surrounding cities?
- What is the process for negotiating the use of privately owned land for recreational (or related) purposes?

To conduct these interviews, during the months of October and November 2015 the project team met with officials from multiple departments of the City of South Gate, representatives from the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA), Eco-Rapid Transit, and Ciclavia. From the City of South Gate the project team members met with the Director of the Department of Recreation, Councilman Gil Hurtado, and Jerry Guevera from the Department of Community Development. The project team spoke with Lillian Burkenheim Silver from Eco-Rapid Transit, and Aaron Paley of Ciclavia. From WCA, students interviewed Joseph Gonzalez and Jonathan Perisho.

Table 7.1 Application of Methods

Method	Phase	Who Was Involved?	Participatory Techniques
GIS	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Project Team	N/A
Data Mining	• Organization Building • Site Selection	• Project Team	N/A
Field Observations	• Organization Building • Site Selection • Design • Program	• Project Team	N/A
Interviews	• Organization Building	• Project Team • Outside Organizations	• One-on-One Interview
Canvassing	• Organization Building	• Project Team • Community	• Informal Conversations
Steering Committee Meetings	• Organization Building • Site Selection • Design • Program • Build	• Steering Committee • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Brainstorming • Mapping Exercise • Neighborhood Walk
Community Meetings	• Site Selection • Program • Design • Build	• Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Brainstorm • Comparative Exercise • Ranking Exercise
Site Selection Walks	• Site Selection • Program	• Steering Committee • Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Comparative Exercise • Ranking Exercise
Design Workshops	• Design	• Steering Committee • Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion • Mapping Exercise • Group Discussion • Site Design
Work Days	• Build	• Steering Committee • Community • Project Team	• Open Discussion

Table 7.2 Project Methods Logic

Big Question	Sub Questions	Methods	Results	Implications
Who lives here?	How does this neighborhood compare to the broader region? What are the demographics, income and level of education? What is the social and political outlook of this community? What are its unique characteristics?	• GIS • Data Mining • Interviews • Canvassing • Field Observation • Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings	• Seniors • Primarily Caucasian and Latino • People with varying degrees of disengagement with the broader region • People with a sense of pride in the community	• Designs should take into consideration the needs of seniors. • Designs should address lack of access to usable open space. • Designs should employ cultural considerations (color, plating palette, etc.). • Designs should increase privacy and security.
What makes the neighborhood distinct?	What is the physical form of the community? What is the cultural form of the community?	• GIS • Data Mining • Interviews • Canvassing • Field Observation • Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings	• Enclosed community with single access point • Relationship to freeway and Los Angeles River • Physical isolation • Highly cared-for homes • Expressive homes and landscapes • Strong sense of community	• The design should be expressive and an extension of the existing characteristics of the community, enhancing the "island" feel of the mobile home park.
What are the key cultural/social characteristics of the neighborhood?	What is this history of the neighborhood? What land use characterizes the neighborhood? What are past and future projects?	• Interviews • Canvassing • Field Observation • Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings	• It was opened on May 14, 1966, by Andrew Hohn who owns and operates five mobile home parks in California and Nevada. • The site was used for farming and planting in the 1950s. • The residents live in a park poor area. • For projects see Table 7.3	• Designs should celebrate the heritage of the site, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. • Design should have a classic and traditional feel to reflect the age group and history of the site. • Design should make up for the lack of parks and recreational space.
How could this neighborhood be improved?	What are the major issues facing this community? What are the opportunities for improvement?	• GIS • Data Mining • Interviews • Canvassing • Field Observation • Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings	• Security • Privacy • Access to recreation • Safe pedestrian travel • Open spaces • Underutilized amenities • Existing roadways	• Project should better utilize existing amenities to increase recreation. • The design should take into account how this project relates to the public outside the community. • Project should stay private and secure within the trailer park.

Big Question	Sub Questions	Methods	Results	Implications
What is the political context of the neighborhood?	Who are the key actors in the community? What is the process for negotiating the use of privately-owned land for recreation? What organizations are working in the community?	• Data Mining • Interviews • Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings	• Council members • Department of Public Works • Trust for Public Land • Rivers and Mountains Conservancy	• Complexity of dealing with public land such as the limitations of the approval process.
How could the community be improved by this project?	What are the major issues facing the community? What programmatic elements should be included to address these issues? What other elements could be included for general improvement?	• Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings • Design Workshops	• Lack of space for light physical fitness (walking and calisthenics) • Lack of space to let a dog run or play • Lack of recreation space for sitting in the shade and caring for a community vegetable garden	• The project elements should provide spaces for exercise, dogs, shade, and a community garden.
Where should the community improvement project be located?	What are the potential sites? Which site would be best to address the issues defined by the community?	• Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings • Site Selection Walks • Design Workshops	• North Lot • North Rec. Hall • Laundry Room • Frontage Road • West Lot by the Power Lines	• Potential site could remain open to the public but still give residents private access and security. • The public cannot enter the park. • Chosen site should not interfere with current operational and functional space within the park.
What will the community improvement project look like?	What is the arrangement of the elements on the site? What is the aesthetic style of the project? What should be considered relative to maintenance?	• Community Meetings • Steering Committee Meetings • Design Workshops	• Outdoor furniture elements are arranged in a logical, yet interesting way. • Aesthetic style is classic and traditional. • Plant material is low maintenance yet attractive.	• The design will be low maintenance, durable, and traditional, reflecting current community elements and design styles.

Residents and the project team discuss program options during an early community meeting.

Canvassing

The project team used canvassing to meet residents, to explain the project, and to gather the names and contact information of community members who had interest in being a part of a leadership steering committee (see Section 1.4). The project team used canvassing to answer a number of specific questions including:

- Would you be interested in joining the steering committee for the community improvement project?
- What are some of the things you like about your neighborhood?
- What are challenges that your neighborhood faces?
- How long have you lived in the neighborhood?
- What is your relationship to the Los Angeles River?

Canvassing in Thunderbird Villa took place in two phases. The first phase included in-person door-to-door interactions on Monday, November 1, 2015. During this phase, students, in groups of two, visited and knocked on the doors of 45 households in the community, nearly one-fifth of the total residences. The second phase of canvassing occurred during the subsequent week, and consisted of dropping at each house a bilingual informational flyer and invitation to an upcoming informational meeting. The change in strategy was a result of an official request from the management team of Thunderbird Villa who informed the student team that the accepted method of communication with residents was by dropping information in an informal mail tube located at each house (see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meetings

The project team used this method throughout the project to answer a variety of questions, make decisions, and plan for future events.

Steering Committee Meeting One

On the morning of Saturday, December 12, 2016 seven committee members gathered with the project team at the Thunderbird Recreation Room. Following the site selection walk the weekend before, this meeting was intended to narrow down the sites under consideration before the community meeting. The residents answered the following questions:

- Where should the project be implemented?
- What would improve the community?
- What issues are facing the community?

(see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meeting Two

The evening of Monday, February 15, 2016 six committee members gathered at the Thunderbird Recreation Room for the second steering committee meeting. Following a design workshop, this meeting was intended to refine design intentions and to answer:

- What differences and similarities do the conceptual designs have?
- What design features are mutually exclusive

Residents hang up conceptual designs they created and presented to the group during a design workshop.

and should be developed further?

- Which design decisions are consistent across conceptual designs and can be treated as consensus?

(see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Steering Committee Meeting Three

On the morning of Saturday, March 5, 2016 six committee members gathered at the Thunderbird Recreation Room for the third steering committee meeting. At this committee meeting, residents and the project team continued to develop the conceptual plan, and engaged in an open discussion and ranking exercises. The purpose of these exercises was to answer the following questions:

- How should the programmatic elements be designed?
- What styles do the community prefer?
- What are characteristics that all elements should have?

(see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Community Meetings

The project team used community meetings throughout the project to address specific questions, collect and share information, and make community decisions. The meetings took place throughout the project, each designed with a distinct goal and intent.

Community Meeting One

Held on November 16, 2015, this gathering was employed as an informational meeting to supplement the canvassing process, provide details about the project, and learn more about the community. Responding to direct invitation letters, nine residents attended this initial meeting. The intent of this meeting was to answer the following questions:

- Who lives in the project neighborhood?
- What are the issues and challenges facing the project neighborhood?
- What opportunities for improvements exist in the project neighborhood?
- Who would like to take a leadership role as part of the steering committee for the community improvement project?

(see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Community Meeting Two

Held in the Thunderbird Recreation Room, this meeting took place the evening of January 16, 2016. Direct invitation letters were left at all homes in the community, and eleven residents participated in the meeting. The main intent of this meeting was to answer the question:

- What are the priority sites for building the community improvement project?

(see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Community Meeting Three

Following design workshops, a third community meeting was held on the evening of March 14, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall at Thunderbird Villa. The twelve participants who came to the meeting were introduced to an interim conceptual design. The major intent of the meeting was to gain more information related to

design specifics. Questions asked included:

- What level of maintenance are you willing to perform on your property?
- What plants do you notice frequently in your community that might suit the project?
- Which styles do you prefer for a variety of site elements?

(see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Site Selection Walks

The project team used this method to select and analyze possible locations for the community improvement project. On December 5, 2015, fourteen residents of Thunderbird Villa met at the Thunderbird Recreation Room to participate in this activity. Maps were provided for participants to record their experiences at each location visited during the walk (see Section 7.4 for details of the results). The aim of this event was to answer the following questions:

- What locations would be suitable for a community improvement project that addresses issues facing the community?
- What are major issues facing the community?
- What could the community improvement project build to address these issues?

Community members vote for potential sites during the site selection process using dotmocracy.

Design Workshops

The project team used this method to determine how to best improve selected project sites. Design workshops were utilized to develop conceptual designs for the top two project sites and to develop the long-term plan.

Design Workshop One

The first design workshop was held in the Thunderbird Recreation Room on the evening of February 6, 2016. Twelve people attended this workshop which was intended to answer the following question:

- How can we improve the potential project sites using the programmatic elements selected during previous meetings?

Residents were provided large base maps of the project site and movable icons that represented the programmatic elements they had chosen. Residents were instructed to develop conceptual designs by moving the elements around to organize the space (see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Design Workshop Two

On February 20, 2016, the second design workshop was held at Thunderbird Villa Thunderbird Recreation Room. Nine people attended this workshop which was intended to answer the following questions:

- What differences and similarities do the conceptual designs have?
- What design features are mutually exclusive and should be developed further?
- Which design decisions are consistent across conceptual designs and can be treated as consensus?
- Considering the array of conceptual designs developed in the previous workshop, what is the final conceptual design for the potential project sites?

Working with the project team, residents answered these questions by performing ranking and comparative exercises to analyze and refine previous designs (see Section 7.4 for details of the results).

Steering committee members discuss details for different programmatic elements to be used in the design.

Design Workshop Three

On May 18, 2016, the third design workshop was held in the Thunderbird Recreation Room. This workshop focused on the long-term project that would follow the immediate project designed at the first two workshops. Fourteen people attended this workshop which was intended to answer the following questions:

- If time and budget were not an issue, how would you redesign the sites chosen?
- What design features would you include and where would they be located?
- What are some concerns that should be addressed as you design this site?

(see Section 7.6 for details of the results).

Concerns were expressed about the proposed I-710 freeway sound wall, the fact that the sound wall changed sides of the street, coyotes, homeless people, and the lack of sidewalks. Residents discussed the possibility of one way streets.

Design Workshop Four

On May 25, 2016, the fourth design workshop was held at Thunderbird Recreation Room. Fourteen people attended this workshop which was intended to answer the following questions:

- What features would you like to incorporate into the internal streets of Thunderbird Villa?
- What design features would you include and where would they be located?
- What feedback can you provide on the designs that were created based on the last design workshop?
- Do you prefer one-way streets or two-way streets in Thunderbird Villa?

(see Section 7.6 for details of the results).

The community expressed a desire for benches to be added on Frontage Road, and a curbless sidewalk on one side of two-way streets with different pavement on internal streets and Frontage Road. They strongly disliked the idea of a sidewalk with a raised curb. Some residents also strongly opposed one-way internal streets.

Work Days

Work days were used to implement the designs developed by residents and the project team (see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day One

The first work day took place on Saturday, April 30, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site

from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with six community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Building one prototype chair and bench to work out any design flaws
- Building, staining, and installing two benches and four chairs

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Two

The second work day took place on Saturday, May 7, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with four community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Building and assembling two benches and one table
- Sanding and staining two benches and one table

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Three

The third work day took place on Saturday, May 14, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with two community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Receiving donations from two local plant nurseries
- Arranging plants and manipulating the placement to try different alternatives
- Building, installing, staining, and sanding four more chairs and a table
- Beginning to build the fence for the dog area

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Four

The fourth work day took place on Sunday, May 15, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with four community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Finishing the fence
- Placing benches
- Planting

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Five

The fifth work day took place on Friday, May 20, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with eight community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Staining wood for the shade structure
- Installing post bases for the shade structure

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Six

The sixth work day took place on Saturday, May 21, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with seven community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Assembling wood for the second level of both shade structures
- Installing post bases for the second shade structure
- Raising the second level for both shade structures
- Planting
- Obtaining soil, delivering, and unloading it at the site

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Seven

The seventh work day took place on Sunday, May 22, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with six community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Building two vegetable planters
- Laying down plastic for the bottom of two vegetable beds
- Arranging brick borders in the planting areas
- Planting

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Eight

The eighth work day took place on Saturday, May 28, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with four community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Arranging brick borders in the planting areas
- Planting

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Nine

The ninth work day took place on Wednesday, June 1, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. with four

community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Assembling parallel bars for exercise equipment
- Cutting wood pieces for the multi-purpose platform
- Cutting 6 x 6 post bases

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Ten

The tenth work day took place on Saturday, June 4, 2016, at the North Rec. Hall project site from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with six community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Installing and arranging the remaining brick borders for planting areas
- Digging holes for trees and planting them
- Stabilizing post bases for both shade structures

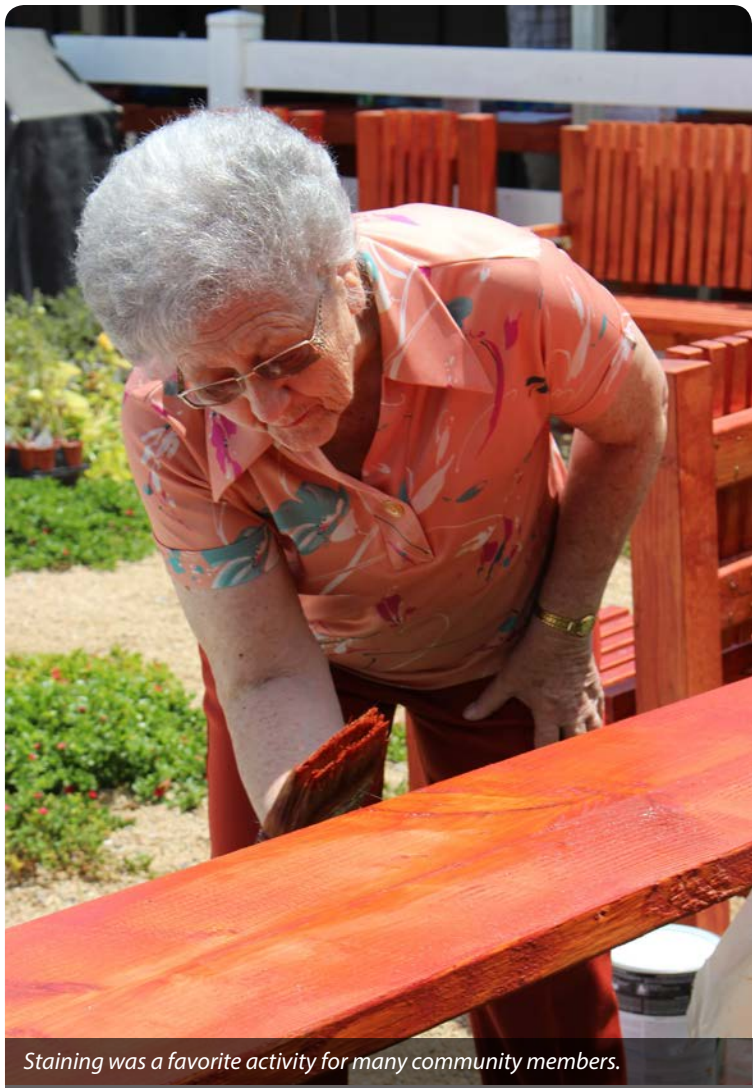
(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).

Work Day Eleven

The eleventh work day took place on Sunday, June 5, 2016 at the North Rec. Hall project site from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with six community members. The project team focused on tasks such as:

- Planting the remainder of the plants
- Putting finishing touches on any needed outdoor furniture, such as re-sanding and re-staining the top surfaces of each piece
- Conducting a final inspection of the site to make sure the site was complete

(see Section 7.5 for details of the results).



Staining was a favorite activity for many community members.

Raising the shade structure proved difficult but satisfying for all who participated, including community members, the project team, and local youth.

Iconic train bridge over the Los Angeles River in South Gate.

Neighborhood Demographics

The City of South Gate has nearly 96,000 residents, 96% of whom are Hispanic. By contrast, Thunderbird Villa's isolated population is non-Hispanic White, with only 26% Hispanic. The County of Los Angeles is around 46% Hispanic. While median income in the City of South Gate is near $47,000, it is only $28,000 for residents of Thunderbird Villa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; city-data.com, 2016). Like Los Angeles County, around 18% of South Gate's population also lives below the poverty line. Of Thunderbird Villa's 400 residents, only 6% live in poverty (City Data, 2016).

Historic Context

When the vast Rancho San Antonio was granted to Spanish settlers by the King of Spain in 1810, the area of South Gate grew up around the literal "south gate" of this 'Rancho' property. The Rancho stretched from the eastern boundary of the Pueblo of Los Angeles to the San Gabriel River. Before the end of the 1870s, a majority of the Rancho had been divided into tracts of 40-acres, and by 1918, the Rancho was further subdivided and sold to homeowners moving into the area. This unincorporated community became known as "South Gate Gardens" (City of South Gate, 2009). By 1880 most of the land use became agricultural, which was considered a vital local industry at the time. Factories and residential homes superseded and replaced almost all the agricultural land gradually during the years between 1910 and 1940 (City of South Gate, 2009).

The city was incorporated in 1923 and had a population of approximately 2500. However, the population boomed from the 1920s to the 1950s as it did in the entire Los Angeles area. Major manufacturers such as Ameron, Firestone Tires, General Motors, Purex, the Star Roofing Company (now U.S. Gypsum) and the Weiser Hardware Company flourished in South Gate during this time. As a result, most of the houses in South Gate were built between 1920 and 1970 for the purpose of housing the blue collar and industrial workers in and around the city. South Gate eventually became surrounded by urban development and found itself at the center of one of the United States' largest metropolitan areas (City of South Gate, 2009).

Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park was opened in May 14, 1966 by Andrew Hohn, a municipal contractor of German descent, and Jean Hutchens (Hohn, 2016). The site was previously

used as a location to park garbage trucks that Mr. Hohn personally drove. One day, a man from Travelodge told Mr. Hohn a mobile home park would be a good business (Hohn, 2016). Mr. Hohn agreed, concluding it would be a better business than driving garbage trucks. The park opened successfully in South Gate in 1966 (Kneass, 1966). Mr. Hohn opened up another mobile home park in Thousand Oaks in the early 1970s (Hohn, 2016). He also enjoyed a career as a hog rancher in Canyon Country, Saugus, and Camarillo and owned hog shares from San Diego to San Francisco. Today Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park remains family-owned and operated in South Gate, along with two other parks in Thousand Oaks and Calimesa, and two in Las Vegas, Nevada (Hohn, 2016). The park celebrates its 50th anniversary on May 14, 2016.

According to historic aerial photographs acquired online (Historic Aerials, 2016), in the mid-1950s the site was used for farming and as a nursery, and it was subdivided into large parcels that were spread across the industrial area. With the construction of State Route 7 from 1953 to 1965 (currently the I-710 freeway) the parcels were subdivided even further and the site was bisected by the new route (Official California Legislative Information, 2016).

By the 1970s, the industrial area to the east was already developed, and the parcel currently known as the North Lot was in preparation. From the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, many major transformations occurred: W.A. Woods Industries Inc. built its station to the south of the trailer park, and the South Gate Water Division built its two water tanks near the far end of the North Lot (City of South Gate, 2009).

From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, the right-of-way of the current LADWP power lines and the North Lot itself went through many transformations due to the interim uses held there, including a nursery and a junkyard for construction. Also, two billboard towers were installed in the North Lot. By the end of the 2000s, the nurseries were almost gone; however, stationary vehicles were parked for several years near the South Gate water tanks.

Past and Future Projects

I-710 Freeway Expansion

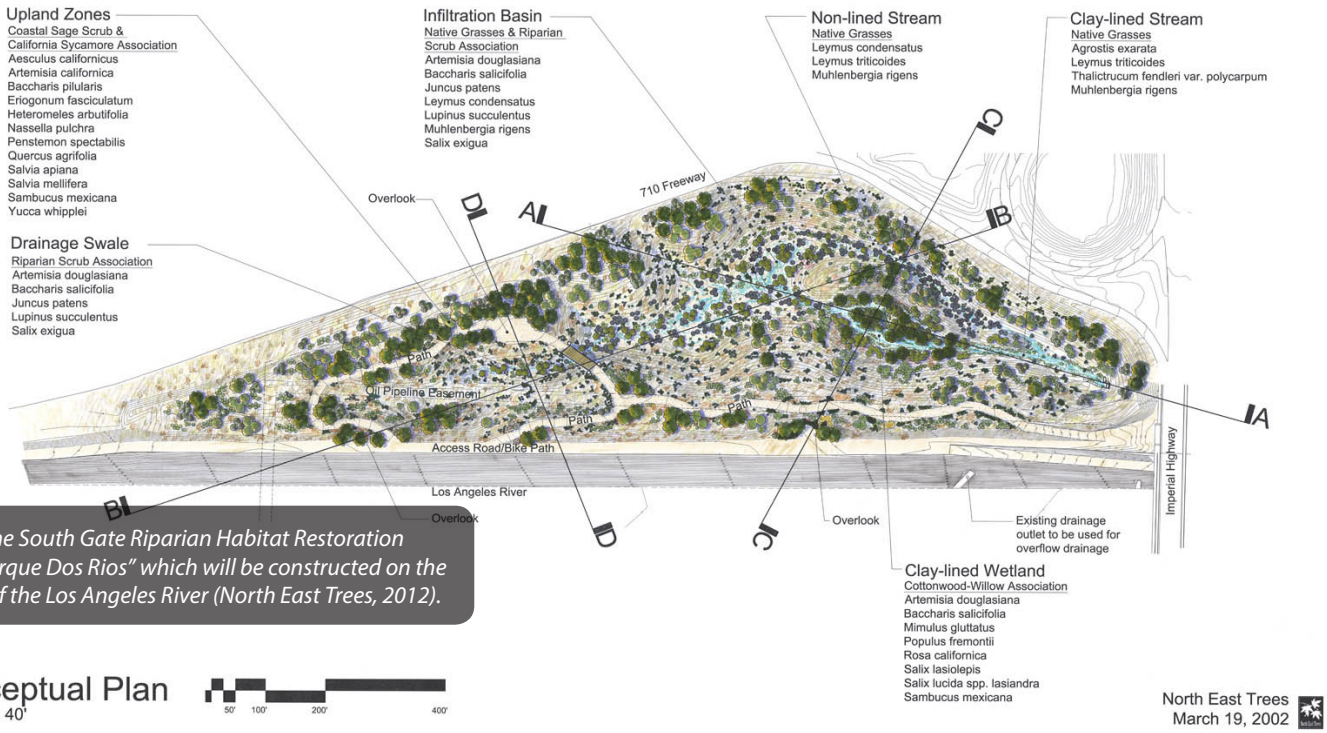
This large infrastructure project includes a proposed crossing over the LA River and I-710 freeway via Southern Avenue in South Gate. This project would add two new access points to Thunderbird Villa and could significantly impact the community's seclusion. The crossing will connect Garfield Avenue in the east to an at-grade rail crossing on the west side of the LA River. To achieve this, the project will install a new undercrossing beneath the I-710 freeway to connect the east and west frontage roads. This will result in a continuous east-west roadway in the City of South Gate (I-710 Corridor Project EIR/EIS).

Early documentation for the Urban Orchard project (Enmasa, 2016).

Future Eco-Rapid Transit improvements (Eco-rapit Transit, 2016).

Safe Routes to School Plan

The Safe Routes to School project has used state and local funds to improve pedestrian and bicycle routes within the City of South Gate. This increased interest in developing active transportation options in the City of South Gate is a promising sign, and could eventually extend to the more removed Thunderbird Villa (City of South Gate, 2009).



Plans for the South Gate Riparian Habitat Restoration Project "Parque Dos Rios" which will be constructed on the west side of the Los Angeles River (North East Trees, 2012).

Eco-Rapid Transit Stop

This project could connect Thunderbird Villa residents to outside communities by a rail connection that runs from downtown Los Angeles to Orange County. The goal of this project is to provide rail connections from Union Station in downtown Los Angeles to the City of Santa Ana in Orange County. There is a stop location to the northwest of Thunderbird Villa on Firestone Boulevard at Atlantic Avenue, which includes an above-grade rail crossing. The project is expected to be completed within the decade (Eco-Rapid Transit, 2015).

Urban Orchard Project

This future project seeks to develop the vacant lot to the immediate north and west of Thunderbird Villa as a passive park and orchard. Partnering with the Trust for Public Land, the City of South Gate has recently applied for a grant from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy to begin a feasibility study and initial drawings for a passive park focused on increasing recreation and infiltration (Trust for Public Land, 2015).

Riparian Habitat Restoration Project

This five acre project is sponsored by the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and will be located on the north side of Imperial Highway between the I-710 freeway and the Los Angeles River, south of Thunderbird Villa on the opposite side of the river. The goal is to return vacant, derelict land back to native habitat (Los Angeles Department for Public Works, 2015). The land will be visible from the LA River Bike Path with rest points and overlooks, but is not accessible to the public (Los Angeles Department for Public Works, 2015).

Hollydale Industrial District Plan

The Hollydale District is situated on the south side of Thunderbird Villa, on the east side of the Los Angeles River and on the north side of the I-105 freeway. The *Hollydale Area Specific Plan* is being prepared for implementation by the City of South Gate to help boost the local economy by increasing commercial and housing opportunities as well as preserving neighborhoods in its vicinity. Despite planning efforts in the eastern part of the city, Thunderbird Villa has been left out of the process (The Arroyo Group in collaboration with the City of South Gate, 2015).

Miller Way Improvements

From March to May of 2016, the City of South Gate rehabilitated and improved the pavement and sidewalks that are located along Miller Way in the industrial area adjacent to Thunderbird

Table 7.3 South Gate Past and Future Projects and Relevance to Thunderbird Villa

Project	Relevancy
I-710 Freeway Expansion	New connections to Southern Avenue from a bridge to the west and an undercrossing to the east will bring new access and traffic to this secluded corner of South Gate.
Safe Routes to School	Currently expanding active transportation routes to the west of Thunderbird Villa, this project may eventually connect the community with the rest of the city.
Eco-Rapid Transit	This project can connect Thunderbird Villa residents to the outside via a rail connection that runs from downtown Los Angeles to Orange County. It will bring more outsiders into the general area of South Gate.
Urban Orchard	Located just to the north of Thunderbird Villa, this project will have direct impacts on the community. It will bring more outsiders to the site and generate more activity as people passing by the Los Angeles River will be drawn to the orchard. This project will give residents of Thunderbird Villa an opportunity for passive recreation.
Riparian Habitat Restoration Project "*Parque Dos Rios*"	This project will generate more interest in the Los Angeles River as people are drawn to the walking trails adjacent to the river.
Hollydale Industrial District	This project will generate more business south of Thunderbird Villa as part of the Eco-Rapid Transit plan and therefore, more interest and traffic along the Los Angeles River.
Miller Way Improvements	The City of South Gate improved the pavement and sidewalks along Miller Way in the industrial area adjacent to Thunderbird, providing better quality sidewalks.

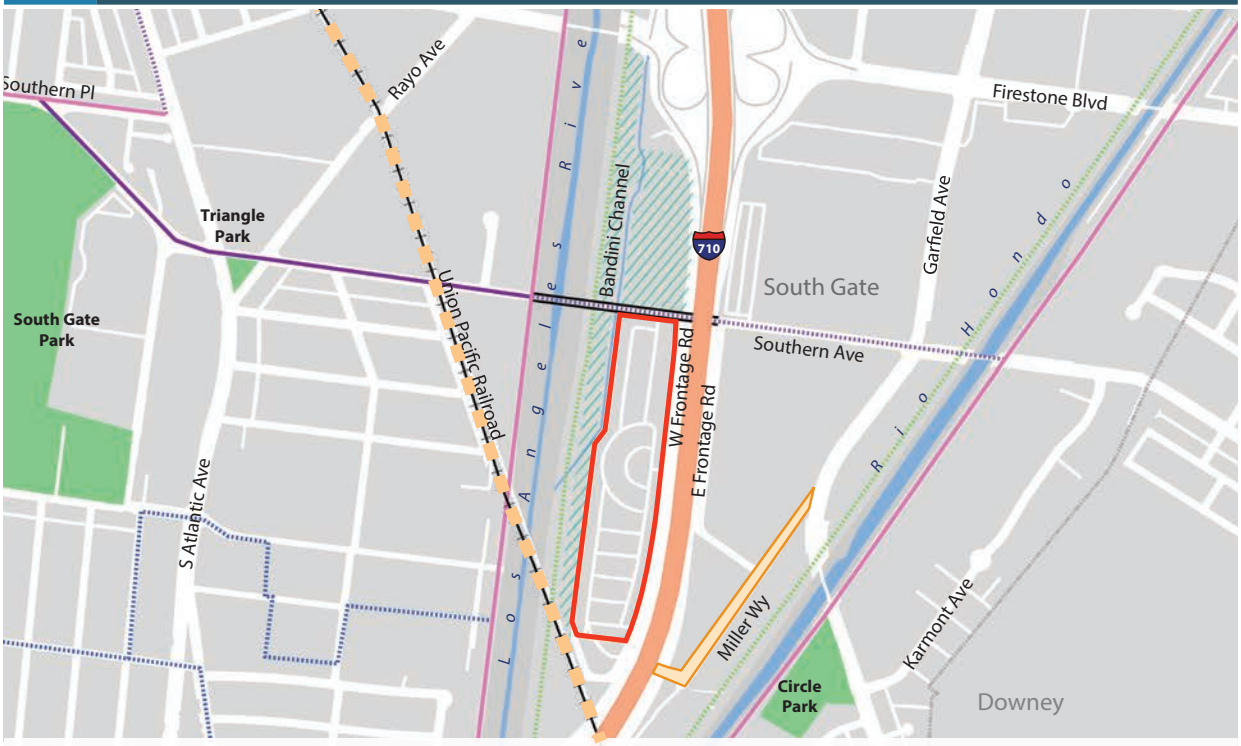
The Miller Way Improvements project under construction.

Villa. This project also incorporates ramps and signals that allow pedestrians and drivers to safely use the street. The project was carried out by the South Gate Department of Public Works and it did not improve the sidewalks in the freeway underpass or on Frontage Road.

The North Lot is the proposed future site of the Urban Orchard project.

Map 7.2 Future Projects

Source: LA County, Google, Metro, EcoRapid Transit, City of South Gate, Trust for Public Land



See text on pages 252 for more information

- Class I Existing Bike Path
- Class II Existing Bike Lane
- Class II Proposed Bike Lane
- Class III Proposed Bike Route
- Proposed Multi-Use Trail
- Southern Ave Connection
- EcoRapid Transit
- Fwy I-710 Expansion
- Urban Orchard
- Miller Way Improvements

0 500 1,000 1,500 Feet

N

Experiential Quality

Thunderbird Villa is located next to the industrial area known as the 'South Gate Triangle District.' For residents of the mobile home park, it is necessary to drive through heavy industry to reach services and recreation. The industrial environment outside the neighborhood is devoid of traditional residential or commercial amenities such as sidewalks, bus stops, tree canopy, or urban furniture.

Besides industry, the vacant lots and right-of-ways surrounding the neighborhood present large unimproved open spaces perceived as unsafe.

There are many landmarks that could be considered representative of this industrial area. There is a tall water tower located across the LA River, visible from the mobile home park, as well as the iconic railroad bridge. A more negatively perceived landmark is the LADWP power lines located next to the western residences.

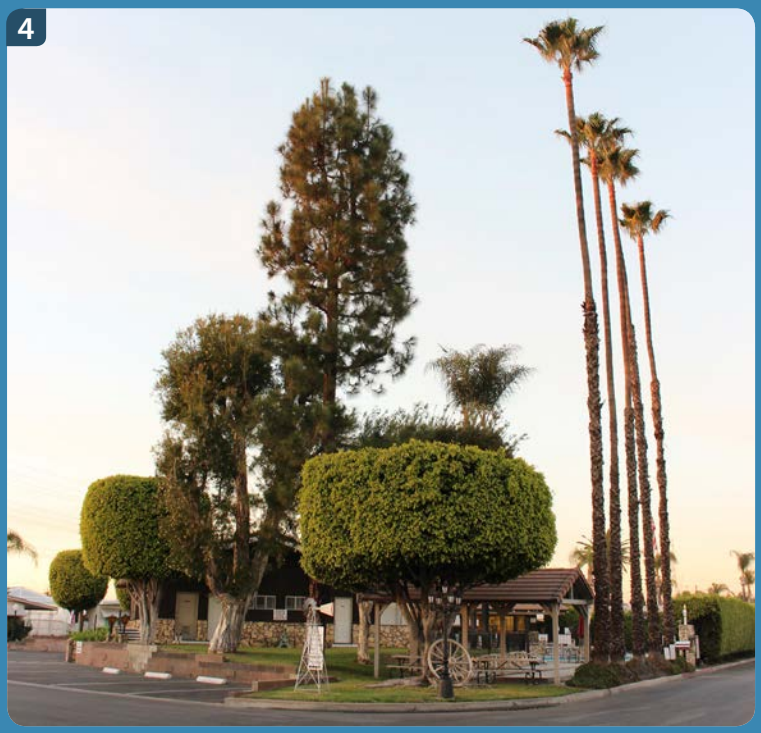
The isolation of the neighborhood between these environments and the surrounding physical barriers, the LA River, the railroad and the I-710 freeway, create a unique context for this community. Comparing the pedestrian experience outside the neighborhood to the one inside is quite revealing. Within the community, there is a sense of relative safety due to the peaceful streets, picturesque houses, and garden art in the tiny front yards, while the industrial area outside is a much more hostile pedestrian experience.

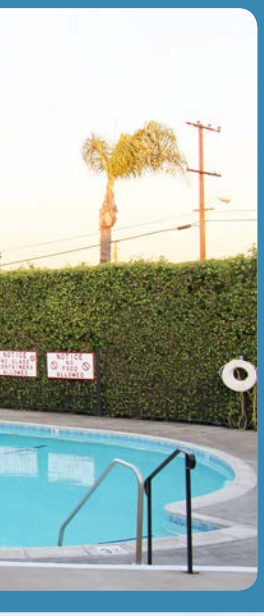
The Villa has an elongated circuit-like layout. Most of the homes are close together and face the internal streets. Any amenity has pedestrian access only through the use of streets as there are no sidewalks. The homes in the northeast area of the mobile home park face Frontage Road rather than the internal streets. Frontage Road is a large street on the eastern part of the Villa, and is wider than the rest of the local streets in South Gate. This is the loudest part of the neighborhood due to its proximity to the I-710 freeway 50 feet away. Moreover, complaints from the residents indicate that the long, wide, straight road and low traffic flows result in vehicles traveling well over the 25 mph speed limit on Frontage Road.

Though the experience of arriving at Thunderbird Villa via Frontage Road is fairly uninviting, after turning into the community one experiences the isolated character of the neighborhood. This has resulted in a unique island-like community

The Thunderbird Recreation Hall is the main recreational amenity in the neighborhood.

Figure 7.1 Experiential Quality in Thunderbird Villa





3

1 The North Rec. Hall provides lawn areas and open space for leisure in a quiet and isolated environment.

2 The landmark of the neighborhood is the iconic Thunderbird Recreation Room. Guests and residents are attracted to its resort-like amenities.

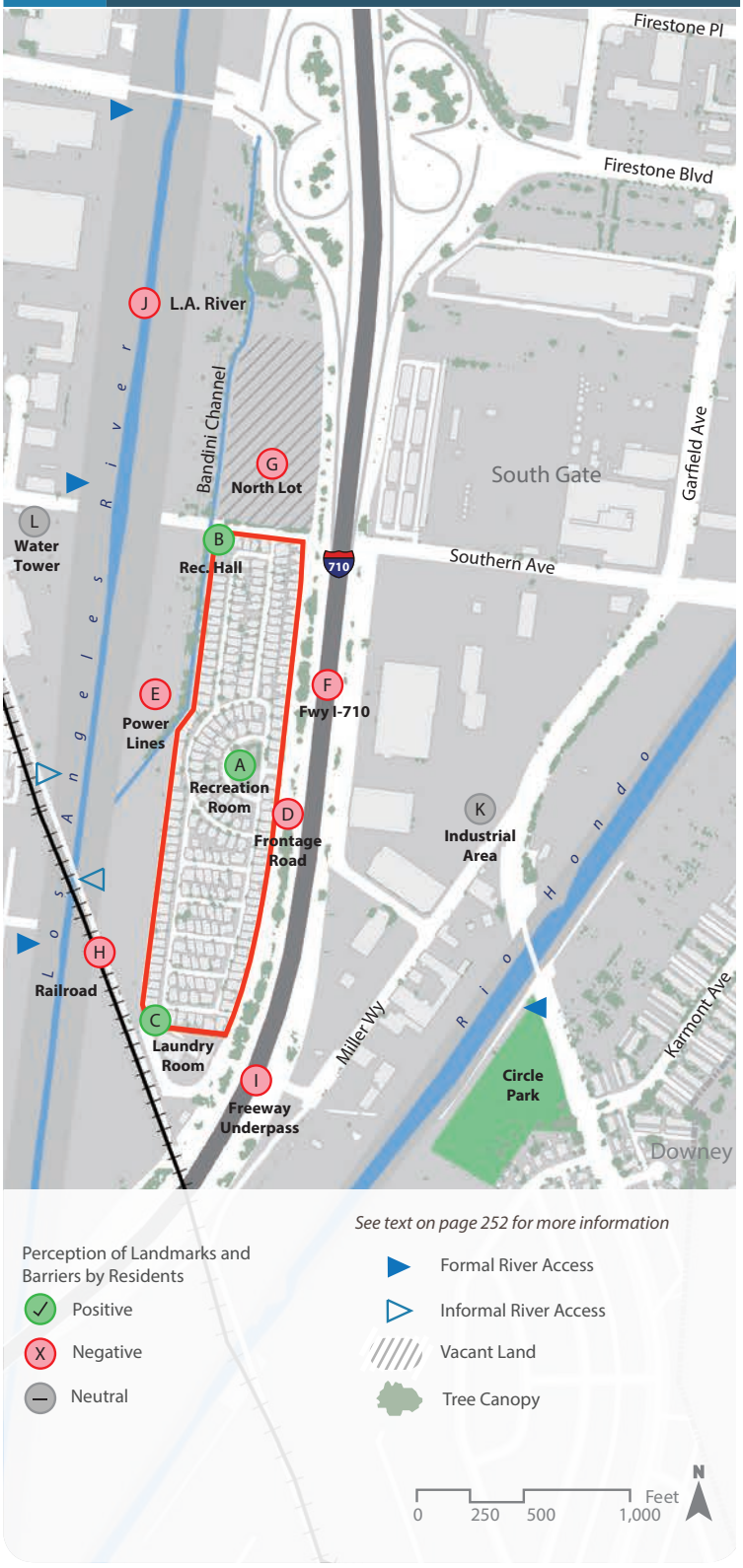
3 Residents are received by a welcoming main access, guided by signs communicating community rules.

4 The characteristic vegetation of the neighborhood includes palm trees, ficus trees, and small patches of lawn.

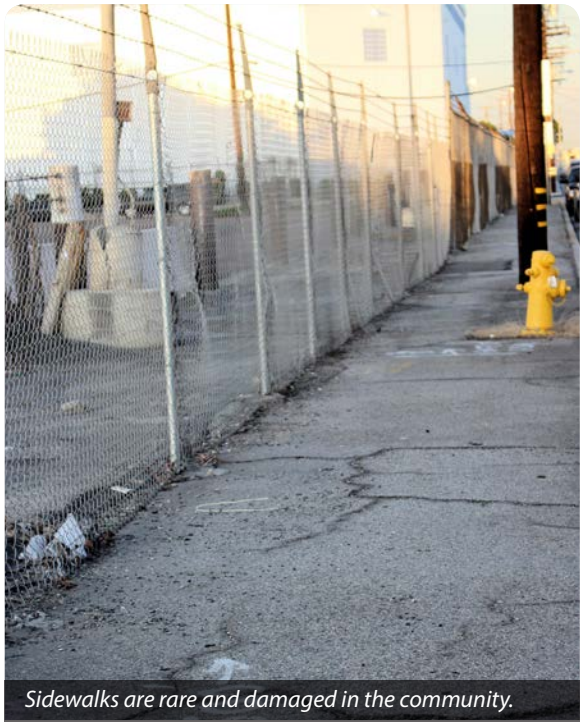
5 Outside the Villa, Frontage Road's width ranges between 40' and 45' and is considered above the South Gate standard for residential local streets.

6 Inside Thunderbird, the width of the streets range between 25' and 30', and the quality of the pavement is better than in the industrial area. Along with the lower speeds and home decor this gives the neighborhood a cozy and safe atmosphere that residents take pride in and visitors instantly notice.

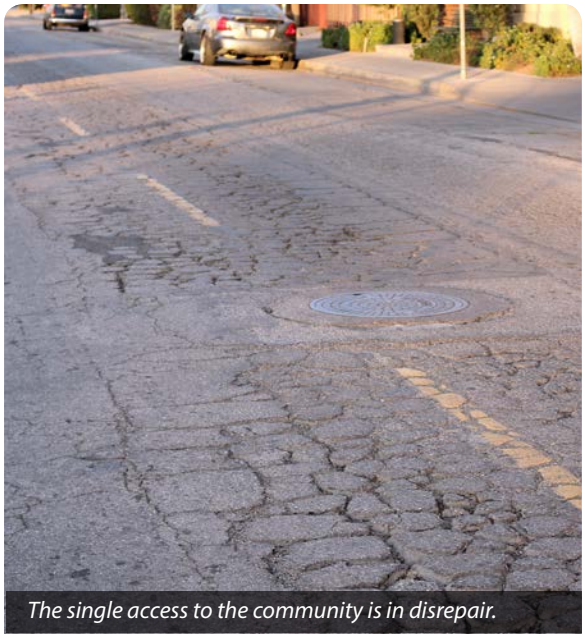
Map 7.3 Landmarks, Barriers, and Amenities Source: Community Input



amidst the heavy industry, traffic, power and water right-of-ways which border it. During community meetings, residents conveyed their feelings about a variety of areas within and around Thunderbird Villa (see Map 7.3). Residents were overwhelmingly positive about spaces within the mobile home park. However, the residents had negative feelings about many spaces outside the park, especially the Los Angeles River, the railroad, and the I-710 freeway.



Sidewalks are rare and damaged in the community.



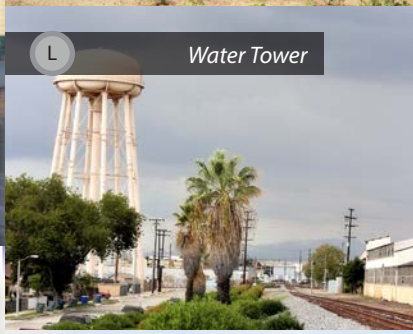
The single access to the community is in disrepair.

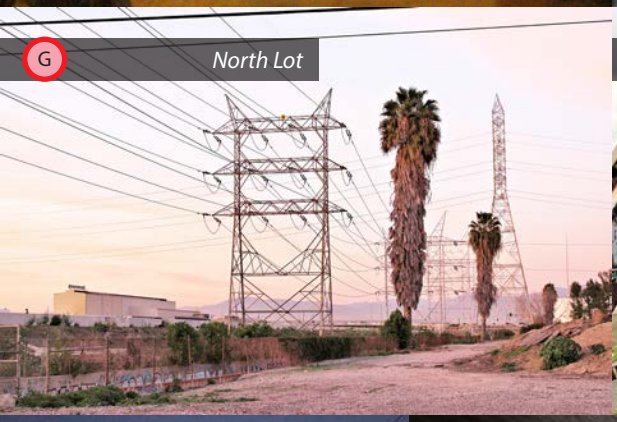
A
Recreation Room

D
Frontage Road

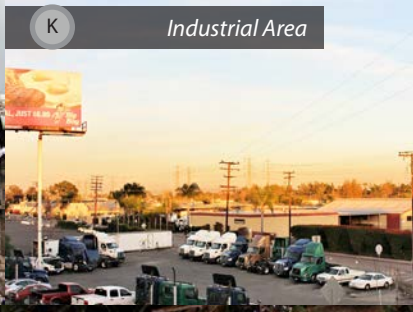
E
Power Lines

F
I-710 Freeway

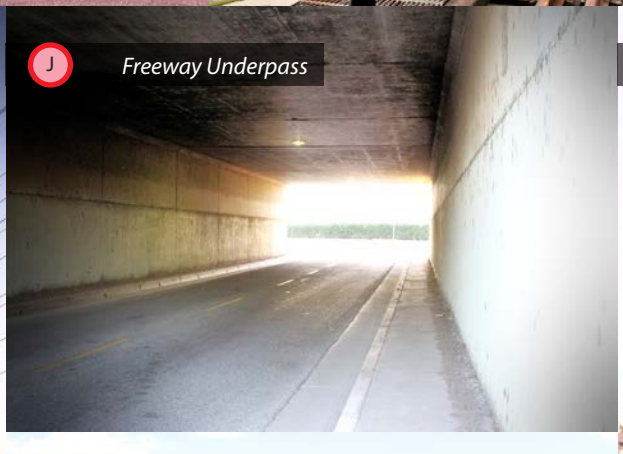

L
Water Tower


G
North Lot

H
Railroad


K
Industrial Area

C
Laundry Room


J
Freeway Underpass

B
North Rec. Hall

I
LA River

Neighborhood Identity

Despite very small front yards, most homes in Thunderbird Villa have outdoor furniture, sculptural elements, or other decoration. Decorations range from a variety of carved and stamped statuettes to religious relics and symbols. Many residences display patriotic and American historical symbols. Through conversations with residents, the project team learned that outdoor paraphernalia, such as American flags, welcome signs, flower planters, and decorative sculptures are commonly favored and encouraged. The sheer variety of colorful, and sometimes unusual, facades suggest a high level of care and concern for individual identity.

The project team perceived a strong sense of community and camaraderie among the residents and observed a consistent, high rate of attendance and active participation by residents in community gatherings and various committee meetings.

Palm trees define the streetscape edges of the neighborhood, performing aesthetic functions rather than environmental or recreational ones. Queen palms (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) are distributed evenly among the streets in Thunderbird Villa along with some Mexican fan palms (*Washingtonia robusta*). The majority of the vegetation surrounding the Villa is located along the I-710 freeway, and along the Bandini Channel to the northwest. The North Lot also has some shrubs growing against the fence of the RV parking area. Inside the Villa, the area surrounding the Thunderbird Recreation Room has the most tree canopy cover and vegetation.

Some yards are decorated with handicrafts and religious sculptures.

The streets of Thunderbird Villa reflect the personalities of the residents.

The Thunderbird Villa sign on the Thunderbird Recreation Room.

Residents' homes extend nearly to the streets' edge, leaving little 'yard' space.

A characteristically verdant front yard of a home in Thunderbird Villa.

Recreation

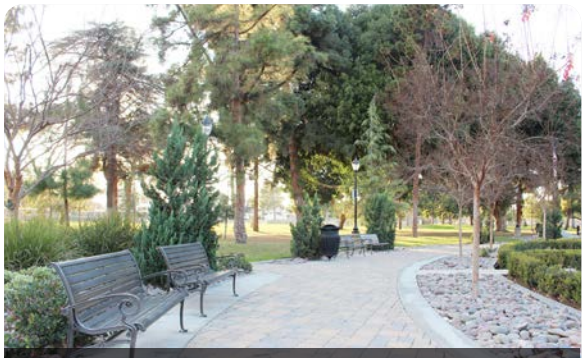
To better understand the recreational opportunities and conditions around Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park, the team surveyed the parks, schools, commercial areas, vacant lots, right-of-ways and the existing network of trails in the area. The City of South Gate has nine parks distributed unevenly across the city, resulting in a lack of recreation in some areas, including the areas near Thunderbird Villa. The neighborhood has virtually no access to parks by foot due to long distances, its industrial context and insufficient sidewalks. The Triangle District, an industrial zone bordering the Villa, includes very little shade, an unpleasant walking environment, and a poor visual experience that the residents consider neither interesting nor safe.

The closest parks to Thunderbird Villa are Circle Park, a four acre open space a 20 minute walk from the neighborhood; Triangle Park, a 0.3 acre garden located a 45 minute walk away; and South Gate Park, the largest city park at 97 acres which is a 50 minute walk away (see Map 7.4). In an attempt to consider all the possible recreation areas that could be used by Thunderbird Villa residents, the team also studied nearby schools and private recreational facilities. Schools in South Gate are located on the western side of the LA River, and other recreational facilities include the Los Amigos Golf Club, which is located in the City of Downey, but within driving distance from Thunderbird. According to recorded transportation times and the conditions of the pedestrian environment, the team determined that none of these facilities can be easily reached by Thunderbird residents. The standard distance most people walk varies from 0.25 to 0.5 miles. However, considering the age of the residents and the frequency of mobility challenges in senior communities, it should be assumed that the distance they can travel is less. Even walking to the nearest destination, which is Circle Park, would be a round trip of 2 miles, or a 40-minute walk assuming that the user does not have any physical limitations (see Map 7.4).

There are no bike paths around the mobile home park, only a path along the Rio Hondo channel which requires a mile ride on city streets through an industrial sector to access. While some residents expressed interest in new connections from the LA River to the community, including new biking or walking paths, the majority wished to maintain their isolation from the LA River.

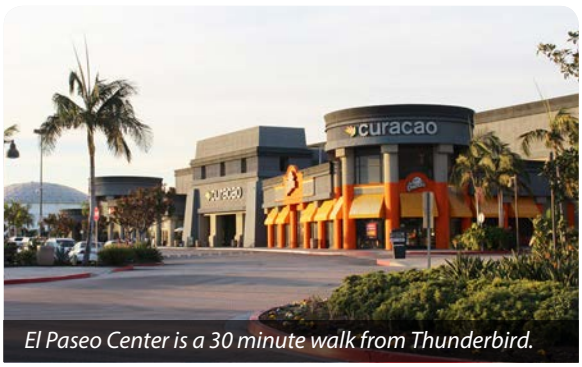
In addition to long distances to recreational facilities, residents face significant physical barriers. There is only one way in or out of the neighborhood, through a tunnel that passes

Circle Park is a twenty minute walk from the community.



South Gate Park is nearly an hour walk from Thunderbird.

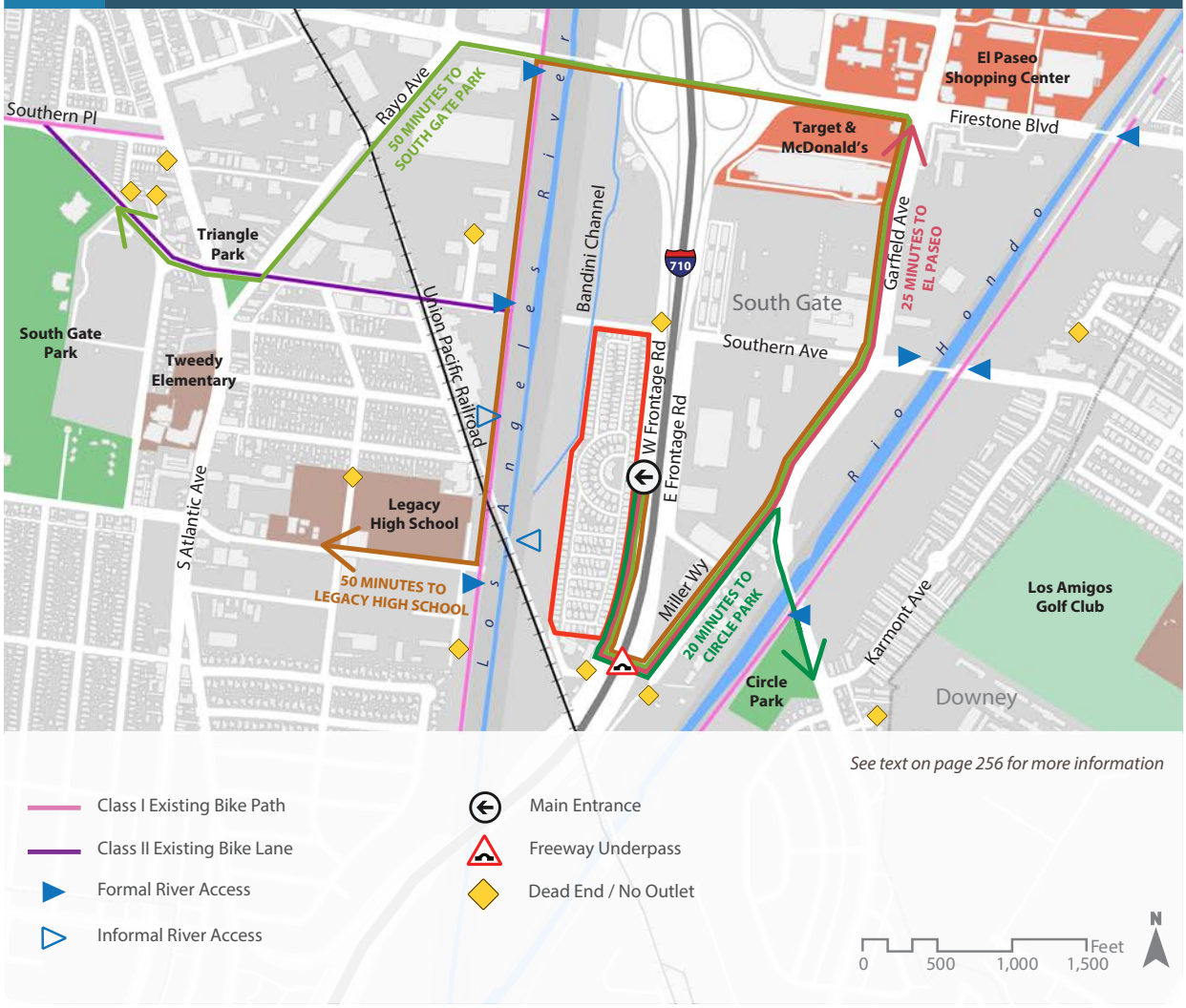
The small Triangle Park is on the west side of the river.



El Paseo Center is a 30 minute walk from Thunderbird.

Map 7.4 Estimated Walking Times to Key Destinations

Source: LA County, Google



Thunderbird Villa is accessed via a narrow underpass.

DWP power lines separate the river from Thunderbird.

beneath the I-710 freeway. This underpass is 200 feet long and 25 feet wide with 3-foot sidewalks on both sides. Even more of an obstacle is the LA River. Despite a nearby rail bridge, there is no connection to the other side of the river by car or foot, making access to the western portion of South Gate a challenge. LADWP power lines and right-of-way are also adjacent to the community, running north-south between the LA River and the Villa. These high towers are located in an open space that is physically separated from residents by fencing and the Bandini Channel (see Map 7.4), which feeds stormwater runoff into the LA River from other communities to

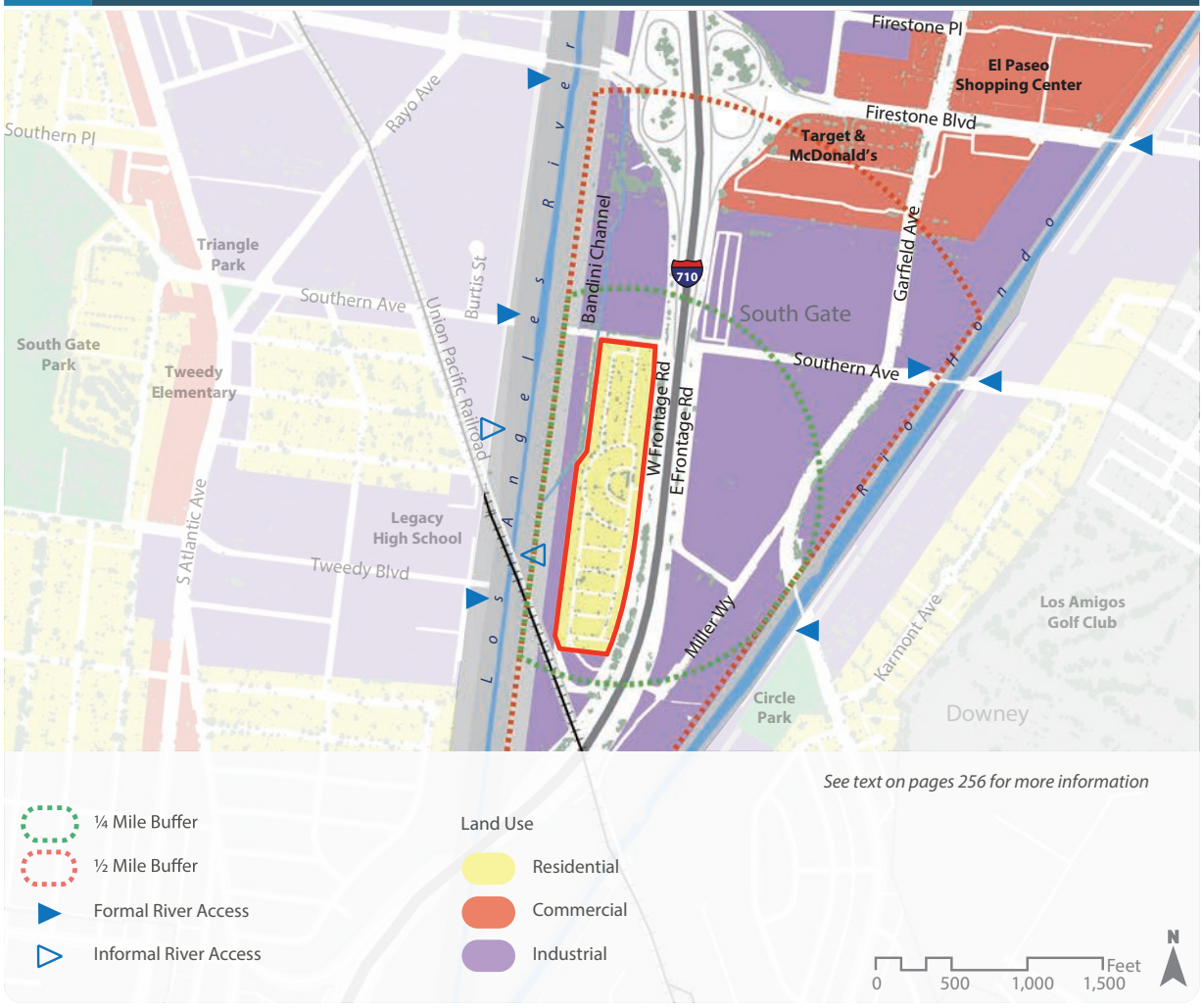
the north. The northern barrier is delineated by a large vacant lot that borders Thunderbird Villa and dead ends at Frontage Road. Directly abutting the Villa to the north is the Southern Avenue right-of-way which is currently fenced off and used as a storage facility. At the south end of the mobile home park is a small industrial complex dedicated to supplying cargo trucks.

In Thunderbird Villa itself, residents described using the streets, which lack sidewalks, for walking dogs, riding bicycles, and strolling. Many also described 'porching' as a common recreational activity, as most residents have a porch with a view onto the internal streets. A circuit of the Villa using the main streets is 0.8 miles long. Frontage Road is also used by some residents for walking or jogging because it has less vehicular traffic than other streets in South Gate. Owners with large or aggressive dogs also use this road.

The mobile home park provides two formal recreation spaces: Thunderbird Recreation Room and the North Rec. Hall. The Recreation Room offers a large space for indoor recreation, such as yoga and zumba classes, and includes an outdoor pool with sitting areas (see Map 7.6). The North Rec. Hall includes a 2500 square foot concrete paved platform and a 3000 square foot green area used to walk dogs. This spot was previously an unpaved area where the residents played horseshoes. According to some residents, the modifications to the space have decreased its use.

Map 7.5 Land Use as a Walkability Factor

Source: City of South Gate



Many front yards are decorated with figurines.

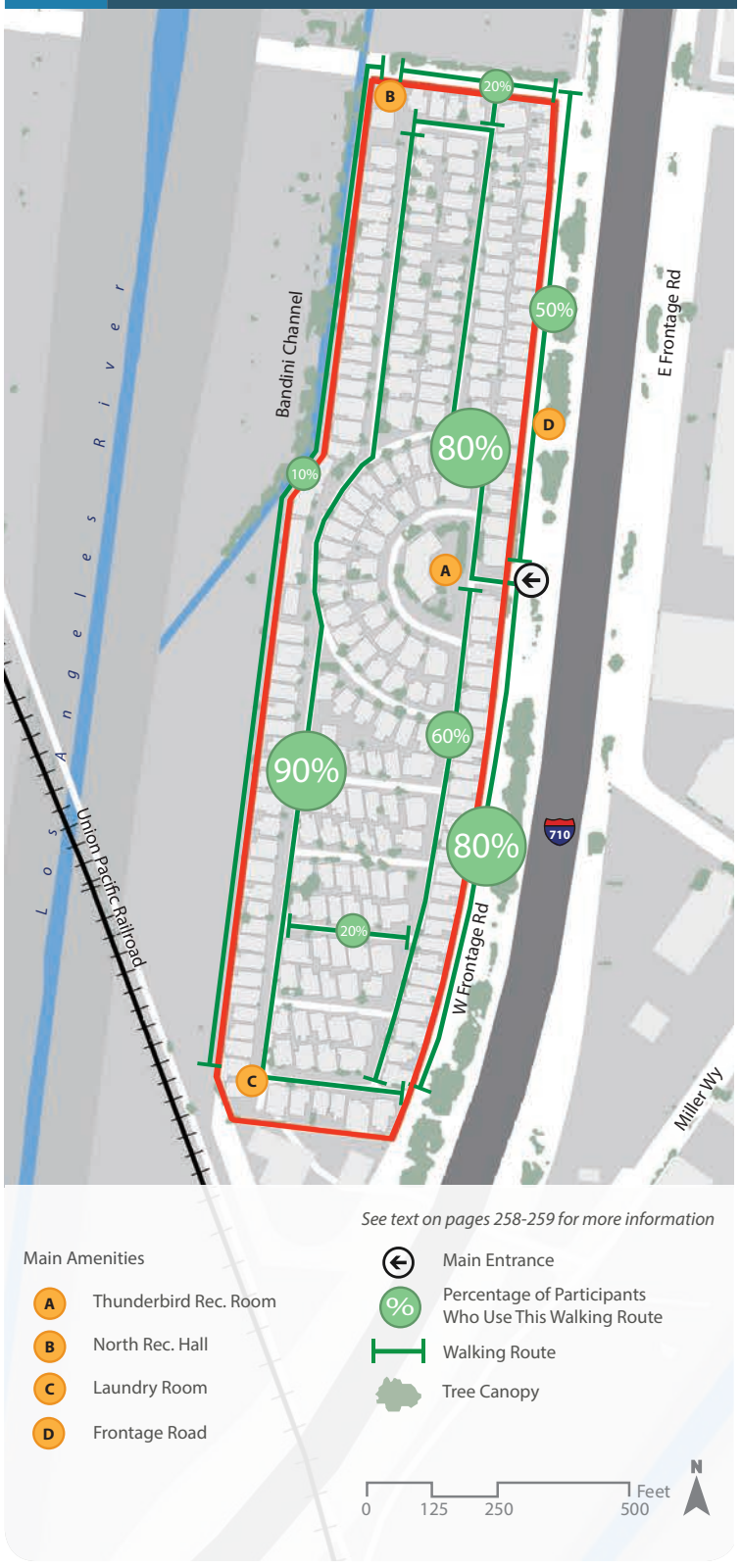
Patterns of Life

As previously mentioned, the residents have to rely on the low traffic streets in their neighborhood for their passive recreation activities. One of the mapping activities revealed the main routes used for walking. The most popular were the main internal streets that connect the Laundry Room with the North Rec. Hall, and the southern half of Frontage Road (see Map 7.6).

The activity also asked for favorite or desired walking routes, and some residents expressed their wish to see a trail or path in the RV parking

Map 7.6 Favorite Walking Routes

Source: Community input



Map 7.7 Favorite Locations Source: Community input

area, as well as outside the west side of the Villa, along the Bandini Channel (see Map 7.6).

As a way to capture the spaces the residents consider positive, the team asked residents to identify favorite spaces either inside or directly outside the Villa (see Map 7.7). The favorite spots are the Thunderbird Recreation Room and the North Rec. Hall.

Safety and Security

Although the City of South Gate has a rate of crime that averages 17% higher than the rest of the state and 12% higher than the national average (AreaVibes.com, 2015), Thunderbird Villa is a separate isolated community. Figure 7.4 shows the number of daily crimes at the city, state and national level per 100,000 individuals. Precise data was not available for Thunderbird Villa, leading the project team to seek further data directly from the community.

When Thunderbird residents were asked about their main concerns, they immediately

The Thunderbird Recreation Room.

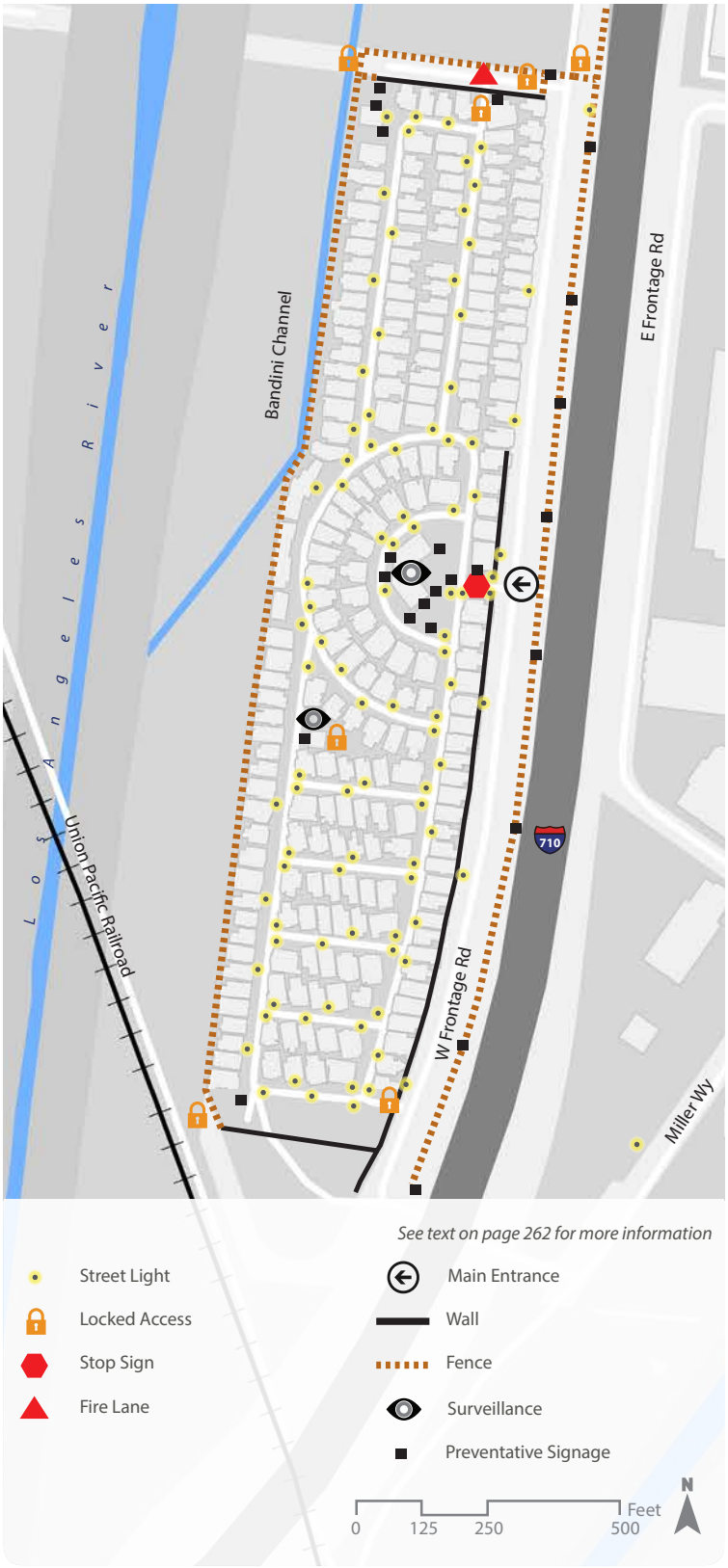
The Community Laundry Area.

Frontage Road borders the community to the east.

Thunderbird Villa's internal streets.

The North Rec. Hall was identified as an underutilized space where many people feel unsafe.

Map 7.8 Safety Elements Source: The 605 Studio



mentioned safety—focusing mainly on crime incidents and speeding. Thunderbird Villa operates as a private complex but is not gated, though security guards patrol the community. Privacy is something residents cherish and is reinforced by having only one access point into the community. Outsiders are quickly recognized and approached.

Some residents alleged to have encountered issues with the homeless and drug use near their properties. Other residents expressed concern about high speed traffic, especially at the main entrance to Thunderbird, where many residents walk. Currently the speed limit in the area is 25 mph, and there are stop signs at the main entrance, but not in the internal streets (see Map 7.8). In order to obtain localized information about traffic incidents, the team created a map showing past traffic collision incidents (see Map 7.9).

In order to understand where the residents did and did not feel safe, the team facilitated open discussions, informal interviews, mapping and ranking activities. There were several spots that the community viewed as unsafe (see Map 7.10). These include: Frontage Road and the main entrance, the North Lot, the railroad area, the Laundry Room and the North Rec. Hall. Interestingly, the areas considered most unsafe were the top three site choices for developing a

Figure 7.2 Daily Crime /100,000 Individuals Source: South Gate PD

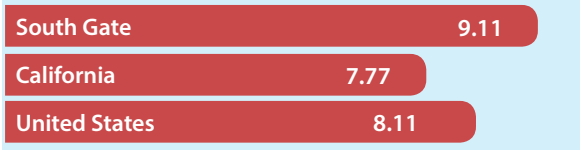


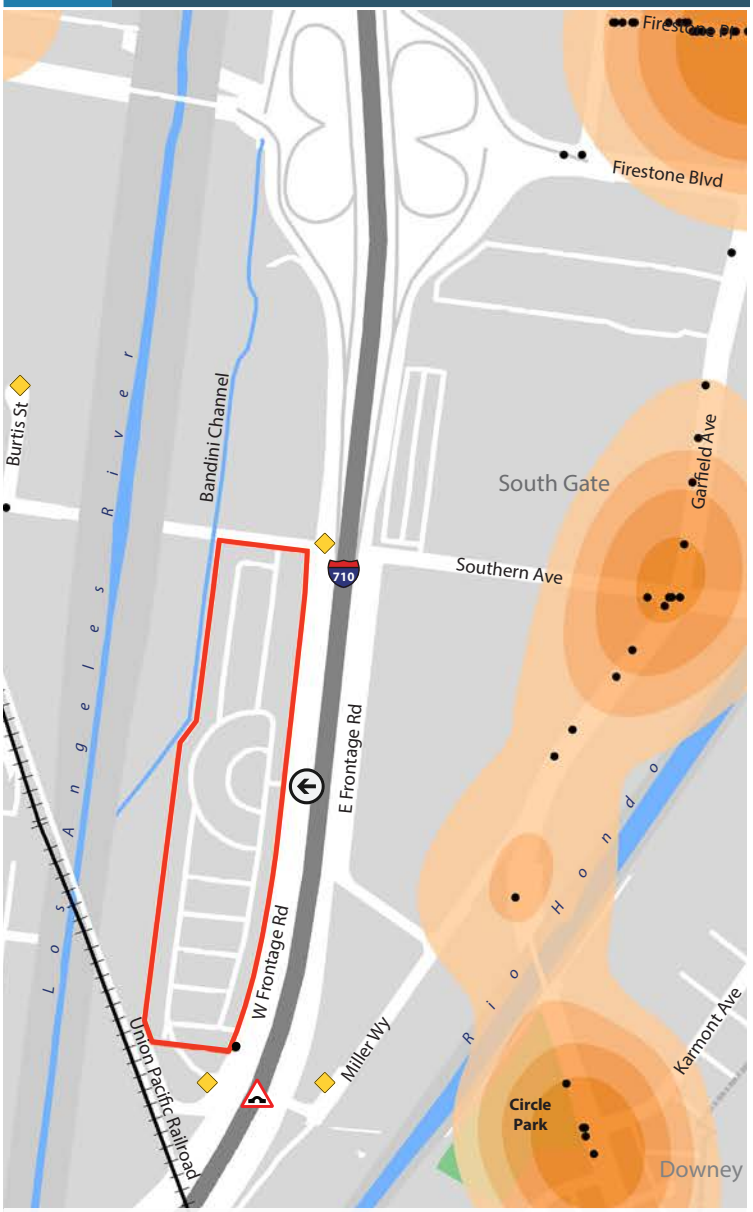
Table 7.4 Crime in South Gate Source: South Gate PD

Year	Property Crime	Violent Crime	Total
2015	3288	850	4138
2014	2695	813	3508
2013	2705	782	3487

The channelized Los Angeles River to the west of Thunderbird Villa.

Map 7.9 Risk of Collision

Source: SWITRS



See text on page 262 for more information

2005-2015 Collision Frequency:

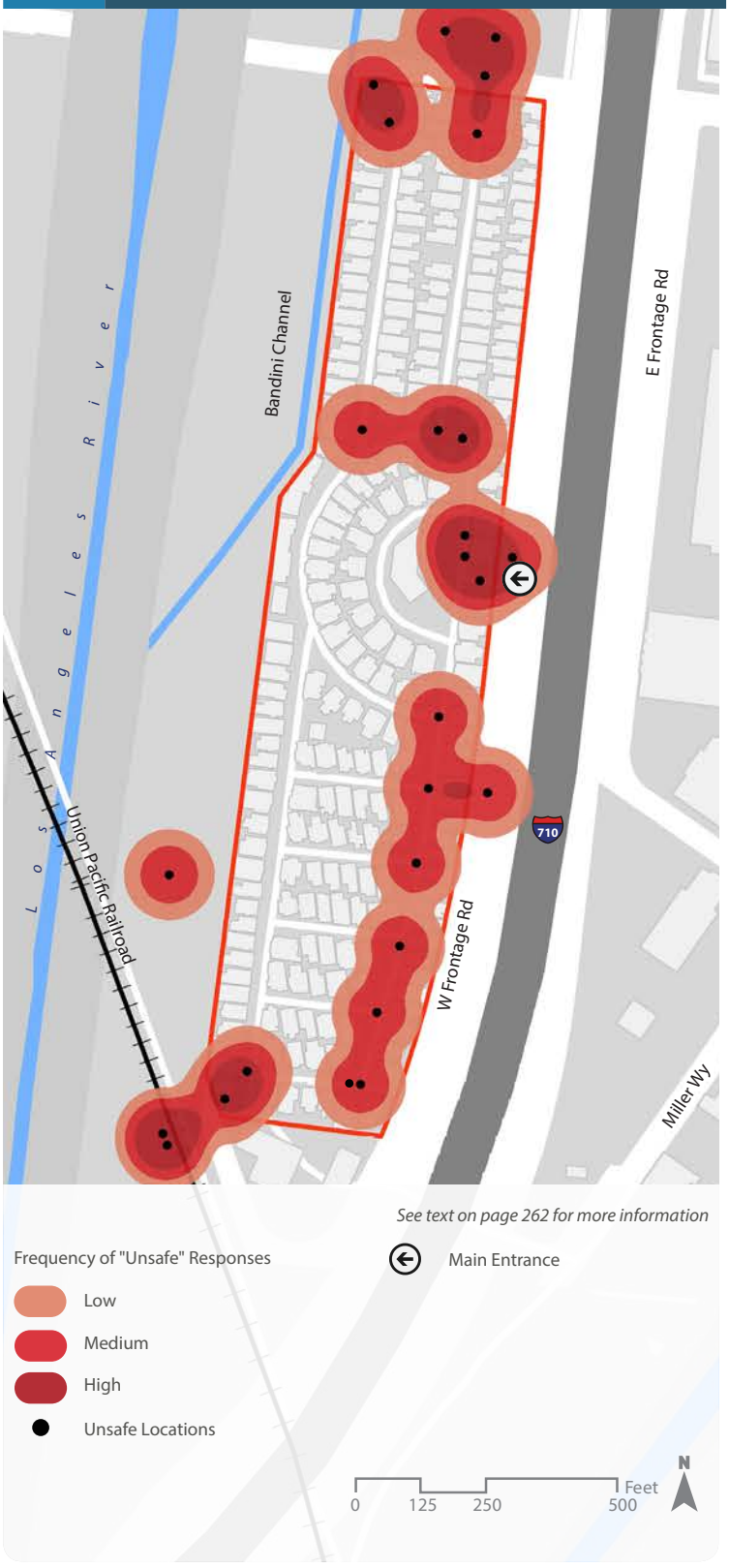
- Low (Less than 5 Incidents)
- Medium (5 to 9 Incidents)
- High (More than 9 Incidents)
- Collision Incidents

- Main Entrance
- Freeway Underpass
- Dead End / No Outlet

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

N

Map 7.10 Perceived Safety Source: Community input



project. It is possible residents wished to reclaim these spaces.

To complement the information about perceived safety in particular locations, the residents were asked to rank the relative safety of each zone inside and outside the Villa (see Map 7.11). The rated zones were: the LA River, the railroad area, the LADWP power line right-of-way, the North Lot, Frontage Road, the main entrance, the North Rec. Hall, the Recreation Room, and the Laundry Room. The results showed that the least safe areas are located in the north and west areas of the Villa, while everything that is outside the residential area is also considered unsafe.

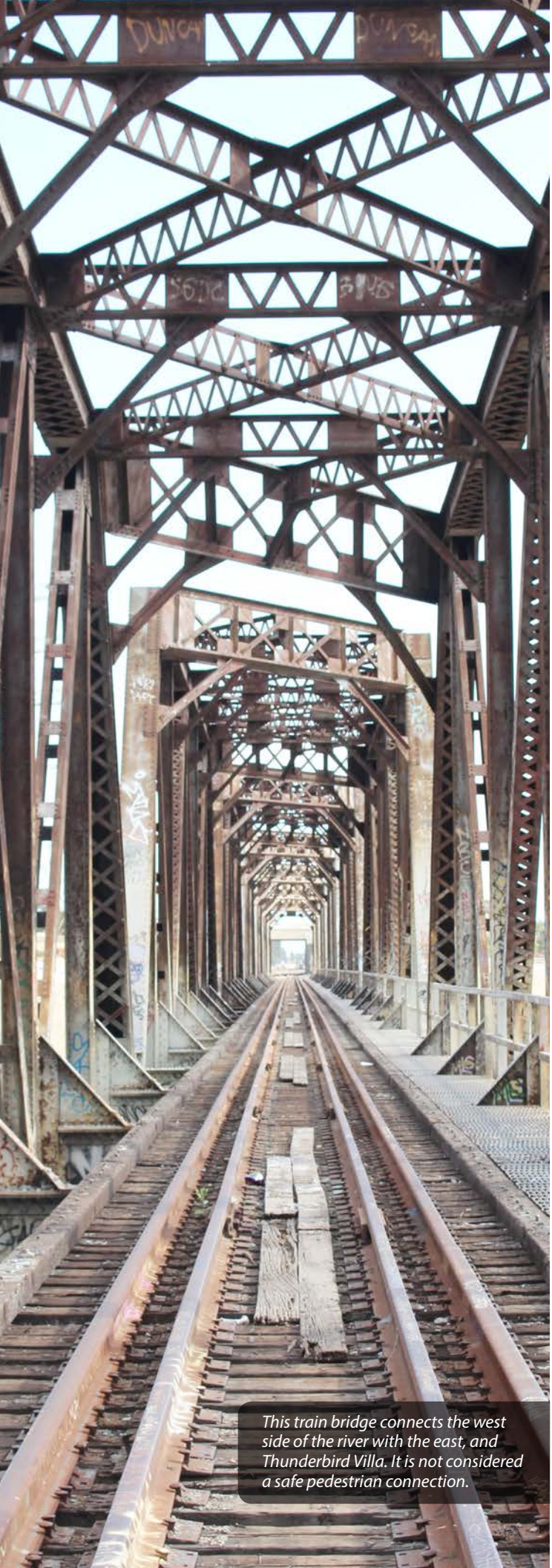
Implications for Design

Some features considered opportunities by the project team were seen as limitations by the community, such as the LA River or the open space beneath the power lines. The project team had hoped to connect residents to the river and make the most of the unique industrial landscape. The community though, often expressed fear of and resistance towards river connections, and preferred to look inward. Relinquishing the design-related decision making such as the selection of site, program, styles, and materials to the community was vital to reflect the desires of the community.

Besides engaging the community and creating a sense of ownership, the inventory also guided the design by highlighting important observations of the community. For example, wildlife sightings and the potential presence of intruders suggested keeping access points and barriers gated and fenced, while also avoiding vegetation such as tall shrubs that could be used as hiding places, or plants that could attract bees, endangering the users of the North Rec. Hall and its surroundings.

The inventory of the security elements demonstrated a sufficient number of signs, high-power lighting, cameras, fences, and walls. No additional security measurements were needed. During a community meeting, residents clearly stated their wish to avoid any additional signs in the amenities and public spaces of the park.

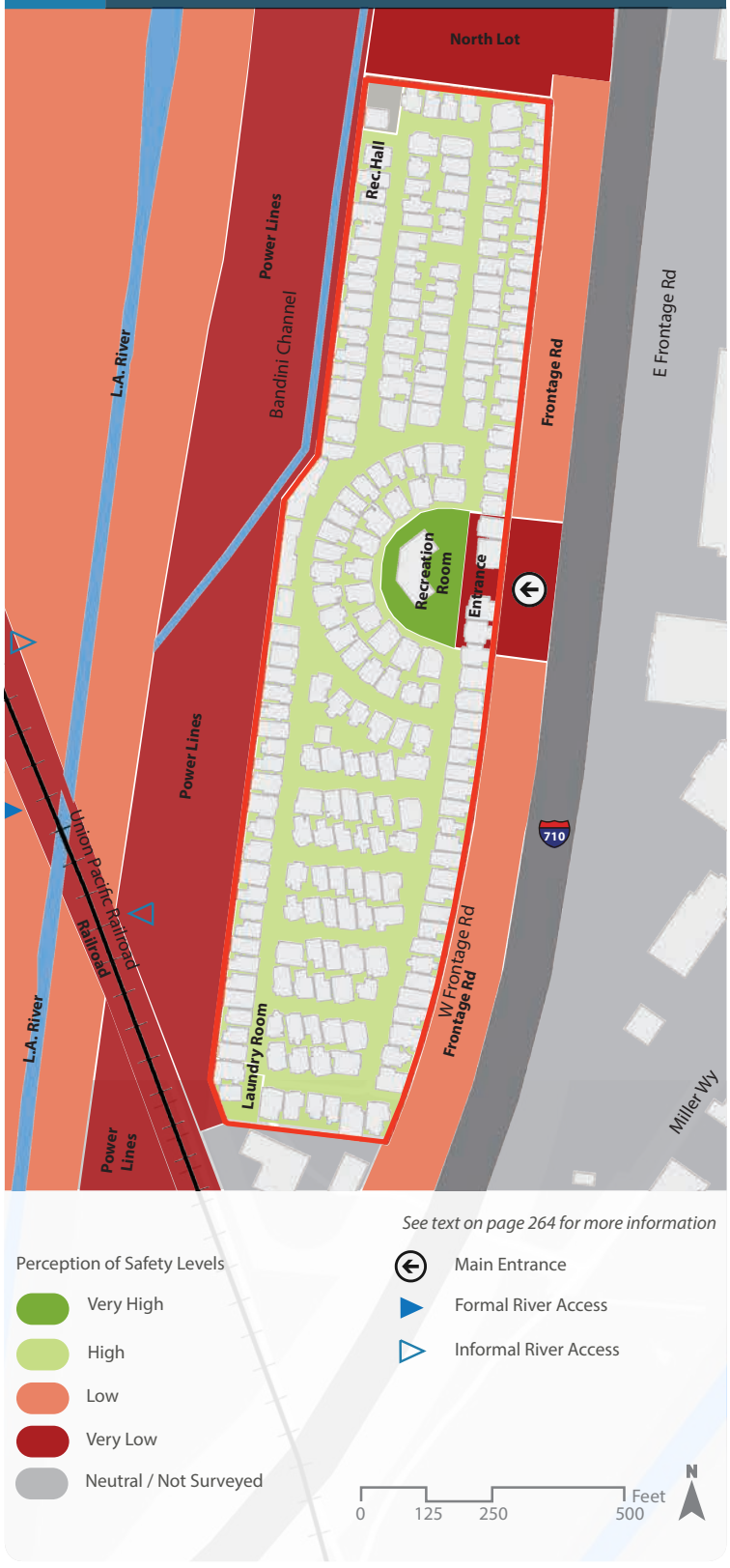
Mapping exercises demonstrated where the community felt safe and where they enjoyed spending time. Despite their perception of danger, the community indicated that they would prefer to increase access to new areas,



This train bridge connects the west side of the river with the east, and Thunderbird Villa. It is not considered a safe pedestrian connection.

Map 7.11 Perceived Safety Levels by Area

Source: Community input



See text on page 264 for more information

Perception of Safety Levels

- Very High
- High
- Low
- Very Low
- Neutral / Not Surveyed

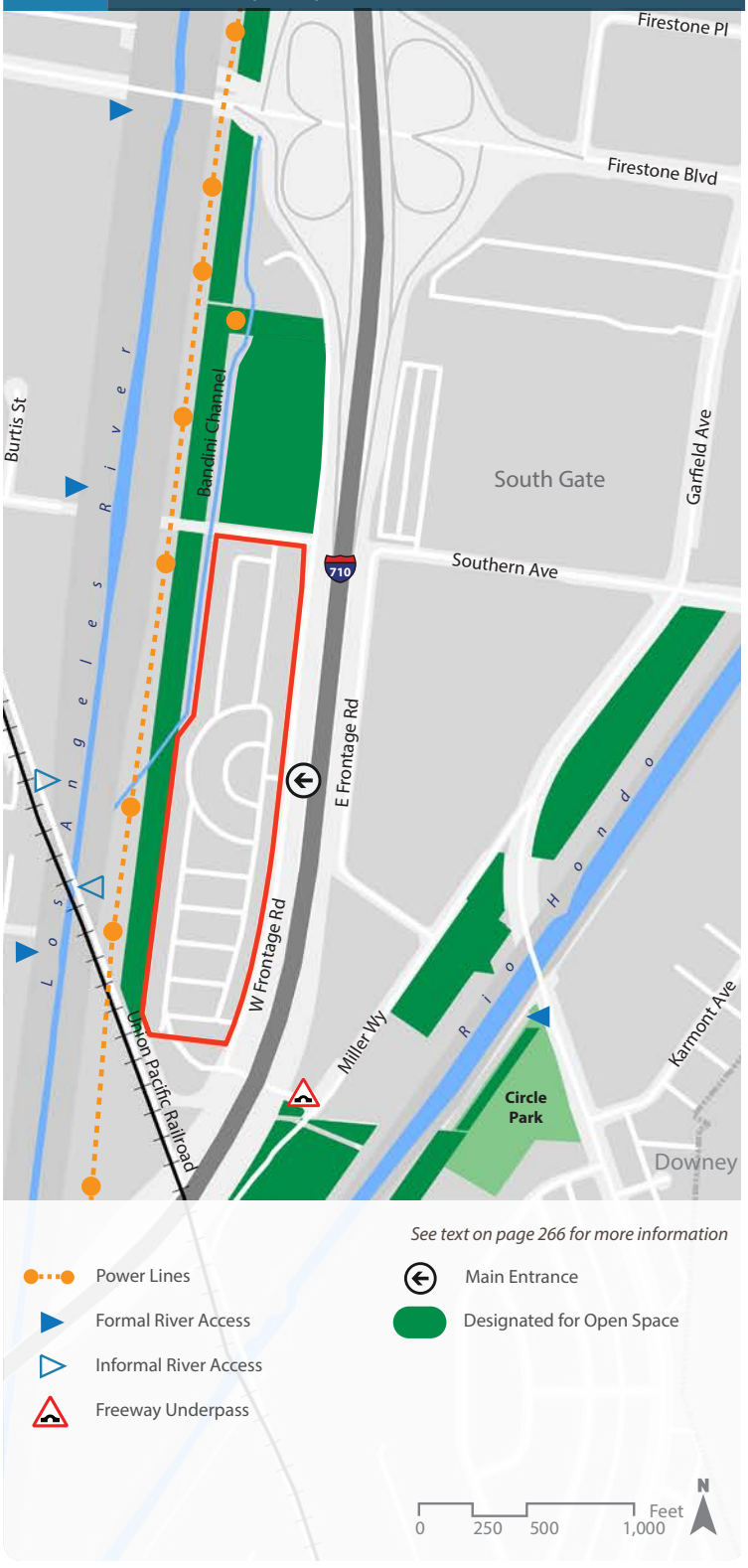
- Main Entrance
- Formal River Access
- Informal River Access

0 125 250 500 Feet

N

Map 7.12 Available Open Space

Source: City of South Gate



even some dangerous areas, rather than closing themselves off more through new barriers, either physical or visual.

Research about future projects that would be occurring around the community helped to inform the long-term project decisions. The project team sought to utilize existing projects and initiatives to inform and support design workshops.

Reviewing the City of South Gate General Plan and its land use designations also provided information about potential locations for future open spaces (see Map 7.12).

The current lighting levels are considered appropriate, not requiring additional infrastructure for the new project.

The existing surveillance seems to provide sufficient security for the community.

Recent increases in prohibitive signs are intended to create order but have caused frustration in the community.

Signs are prolific around Thunderbird Villa.

Organization Building

The project team began the process of organization building by canvassing the neighborhood. Canvassing was conducted beginning on November 1, 2015, in two groups, each with bilingual capabilities. The canvassing process had mixed success. While some residents were resistant to talking, others expressed interest in the project and in taking part in the steering committee. The project team decided to cease door-to-door canvassing after some residents were upset by the disturbance of outsiders knocking on their door and complained to the property management. Of the 45 houses visited during initial canvassing efforts, 25 residents were available to talk, and eight people expressed interest in either learning more about the project or joining the steering committee. During these conversations, the project team discussed with residents issues related to safety and security and the challenges of accessing recreation.

Thunderbird Villa management expressed concerns related to the door-to-door canvassing and requested that the team respect the community's no solicitation policy and resident privacy. In response, the project team changed their approach. Rather than visit residents at their homes, the team invited community members to an introductory meeting using flyers. The flyer outlined the community improvement project and invited residents to an informational meeting (see Appendix D.1). The flyers were distributed around the community in tubes under the mailboxes at each house, following the standard practice of the community.

Nine residents attended this informational meeting, and seven indicated interest in being part of the steering committee. Some of these original members dropped off the committee, while others joined and became committed to the project. The project team also sought specific community members to join the steering committee in an effort to develop more inclusive community representation, including some residents who only spoke Spanish. The number of committee members fluctuated, often due to illness or scheduling conflicts, with a total between six and eight. Some committee members chose specific roles to take on, including bringing food, acting as historian for the site, collecting photographs of possible

The first event with the residents consisted of an informational meeting about the project.

program ideas, and taking pictures of possible sites at different times of the day.

The result of the organization building phase was the creation of the steering committee. Though there was some turnover in steering committee members, the phase was crucial for establishing a base of committed members.

Site Selection

On Saturday, December 5, 2015, the project team facilitated a site selection walk around the neighborhood. A list of potential sites was brainstormed during the first informational meeting. During the walk, the project team and the fourteen community members followed a planned route. Sites included the Laundry Room, the LADWP power line right-of-way to the west of the community, the North Rec. Hall, the North Lot, and Frontage Road, which borders the eastern side of Thunderbird Villa. For each location, the team requested community members write down what they thought and felt about each site, and take notes on a map of the neighborhood. Some of the residents seemed hesitant and had difficulty visualizing different uses, while others enjoyed imagining possibilities for the spaces.

The process of site selection continued at the first official steering committee meeting on Saturday, December 12, 2015, at the Thunderbird Recreation Room. At this meeting, committee members voted on their top two sites for improvement. The team later calculated the voting results using a weighted point value system. Two points were assigned for the committee member's first choice for a potential site and one point for their second choice for a potential site. Based on votes, the top choice of site was the North Lot (with 11 points), and there was a tie for the second choice between the area along Frontage Road and the area in front of the North Rec. Hall (each with four points).

The site selection process continued with a community meeting on January 16, 2016 in the Thunderbird Recreation Room. The goal was for community members to review and confirm the committee's decision to move forward with the North Lot as the first choice, and to vote for a second choice as a backup option. Students explained to community members the importance of having two potential sites, to ensure a viable option. Eleven members of the community were in attendance, including some steering committee members. Steering committee members presented conceptual posters to the community with images of program elements identified in previous meetings. The project team presented the potential sites and the community confirmed the choice of the North Lot as their first choice. Following a pro/con discussion of each remaining potential site, the team facilitated a ranking exercise using dotmocracy. The outcome of this exercise was the selection of the North Rec. Hall as the second choice, and Frontage Road as the third.

With the final selection of the top two sites, the project team began discussions with the owners of each space. The North Lot, which

Residents of Thunderbird Villa prepare for a site selection walk.

Residents and the project team discuss potential project sites.

Residents and the project team discuss potential project sites.

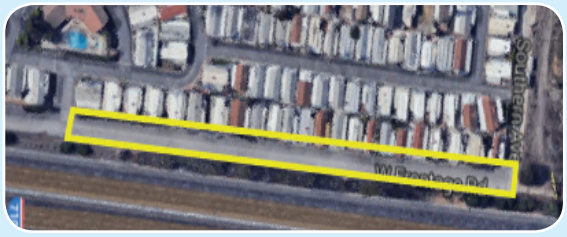
Initial conceptual renderings were developed by the community and the project team to present the project to Thunderbird Villa's management.

Figure 7.3 Top Three Sites

Site #1
North Lot

Site # 2
North Rec. Hall

Site # 3
Frontage Road



was at one point a nursery but neglected for years, is currently in use as a dumping ground for green waste from the City of South Gate. Initial interviews with representatives from the Department of Parks and Recreation revealed that the land is being proposed as an urban orchard. Subsequent conversations with the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL), revealed that TPL, in partnership with the City of South Gate, has submitted a grant proposal to the RMC for funding for a feasibility study to transform both the North Lot and the DWP right-of-way to the west of Thunderbird Villa into passive recreational spaces, with infiltration opportunities and an urban orchard.

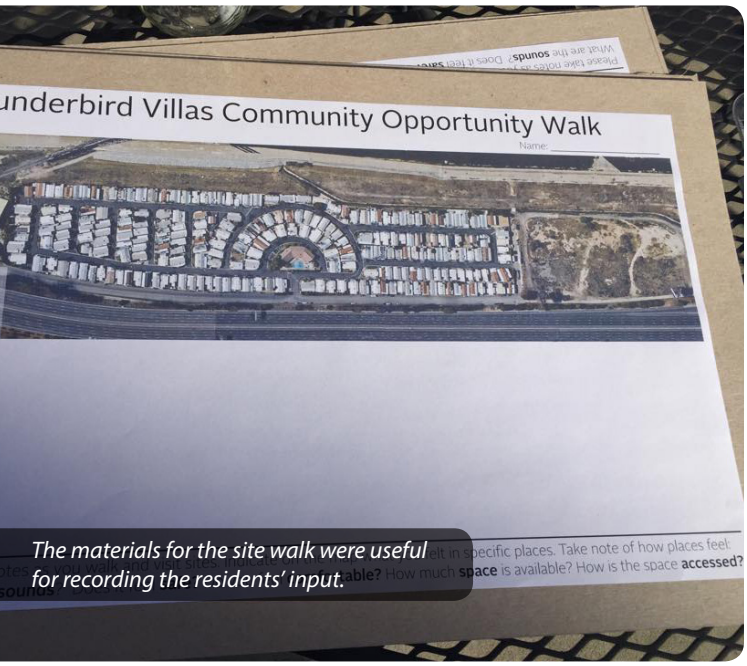
The project team approached the South Gate Department of Public Works and presented a proposal which outlined a potential interim-use project for a portion of the land in the North Lot because the recreational development efforts of the City of South Gate could take years to be realized. Following many visits to South Gate City Hall, the project proposal was ultimately rejected because the current zoning for the parcel does not allow public use and there are issues regarding liability. Any efforts to address these issues would have required a lengthy process, which was outside the limits of the project timeline.

The project team then decided it was best at that point to confirm approval for the North Rec. Hall area with the management and ownership of Thunderbird Villa before proceeding. Upon request from the management, the team developed and delivered a formal proposal for the North Rec. Hall. The proposal included the goals of the community improvement project, the conceptual plan, and the source of funding. The proposal was accepted by the owners and property management a few days later, allowing the project team to move forward with the design process.

Program

The program for the potential sites was discussed at every meeting with the committee and community. At these meetings, residents brainstormed ideas, which included dog parks, walking paths, and community gardens. Following several open discussions, the top

Residents and students discuss potential sites during the site selection walk.

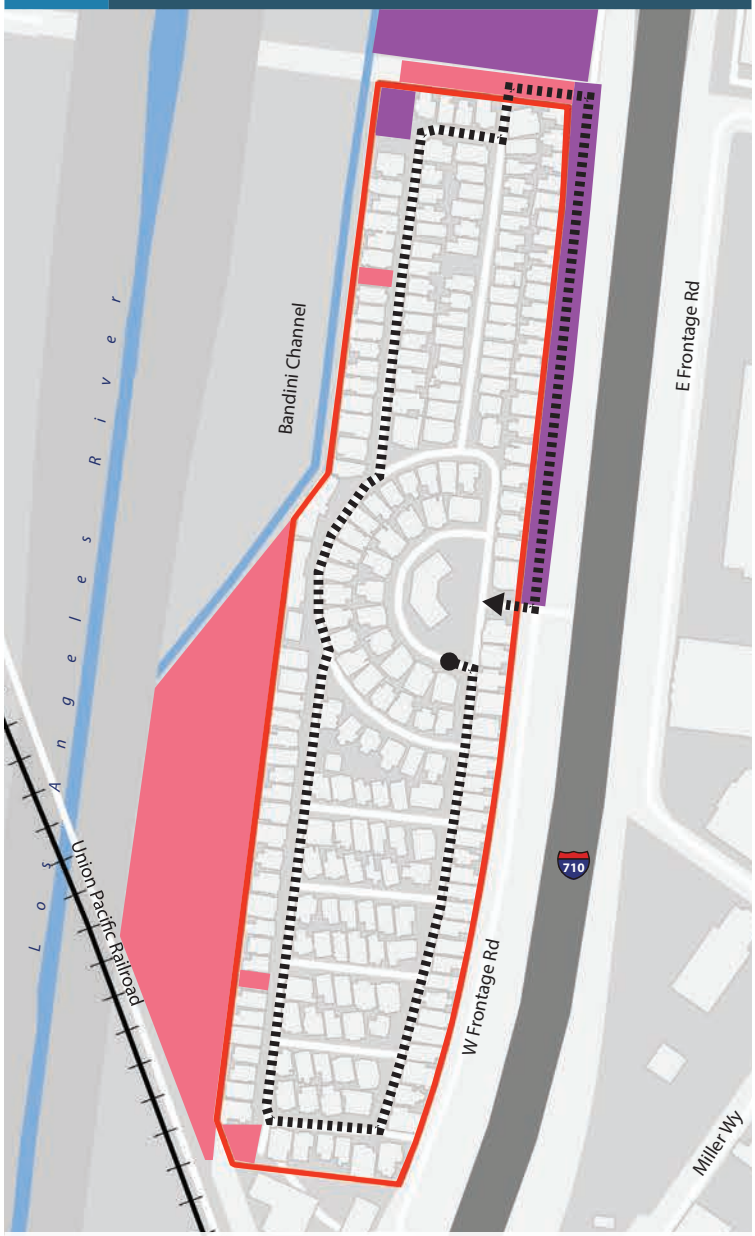


The materials for the site walk were useful for recording the residents' input.

The vacant land on the North Lot was selected as the first choice for project site.

Map 7.13 Site Walk Route and Results

Source: The 606 Studio



See text on page 269 for more information

Potential Sites

- Top Choices by Participants
- Visited Sites
- Site Walk Route

0 125 250 500 Feet

N

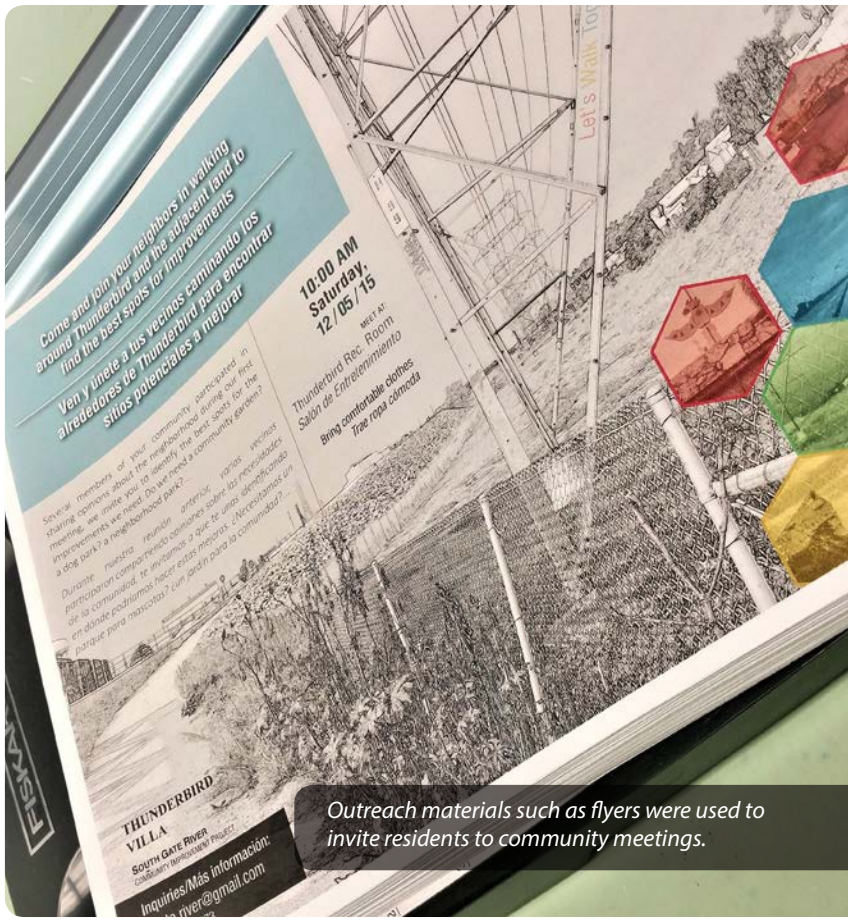
three choices for the site program were a dog park, walking trails, and planting beds and trees. The program evolved as community members matched it to specific sites. At the steering committee meeting, held on March 5, 2016, the committee finalized the program to include a dog area, seating and dining areas, shade, exercise equipment, and planting areas.

Design

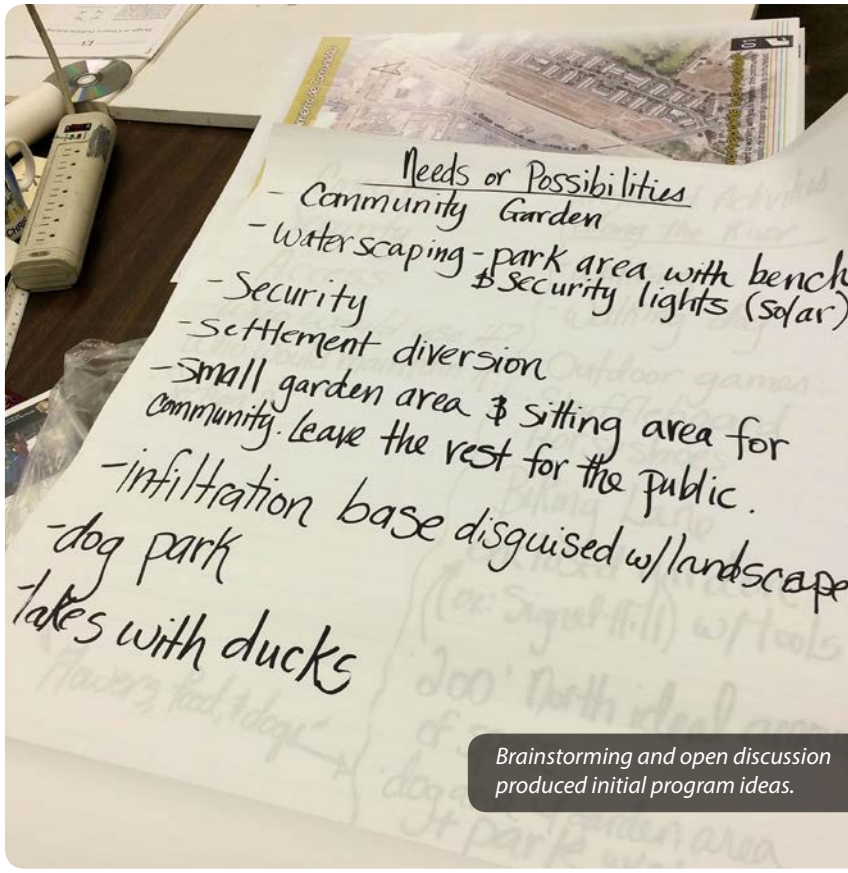
On Saturday, February 6, 2016, the first design workshop took place at the Thunderbird Recreation Room. The team facilitated a group site analysis, presenting a diagram of the sites with a pictorial analysis of wind direction and the path of the sun from sunrise to sunset. Residents were asked for their input and subsequently added noise, dust, and potential access conflicts to the diagram. Residents were then divided into subgroups of two to three people and given ready-made icons of outdoor furniture and plant material that could be taped to a base map. These elements corresponded to the community-determined program for the sites. Any design elements that were not provided could be drawn with pens or colored pencils. After each subgroup completed their design, they presented to the larger group and engaged in a discussion about their design intentions. During this meeting, three distinct designs were created for the North Lot (which still remained an option) and one design was developed (by the entire group) for the North Rec. Hall.

On February 16, 2016, the project team facilitated a committee meeting to refine the designs from the first workshop and to complete two additional designs for the North Rec. Hall. Committee members synthesized the three North Lot designs into a single conceptual design. Distinctions between designs were highlighted and noted for discussion with the general community at the second design workshop. Committee members formed two groups to develop a second and third conceptual design for the North Rec. Hall to be presented at the next workshop.

On Saturday, February 20, 2016, the project team facilitated a second design workshop to finalize the conceptual design for each location. The workshop began with an introduction and a brief discussion of design principles, existing site conditions, and concepts of social seating. The team used a poster as a visual



Outreach materials such as flyers were used to invite residents to community meetings.



Brainstorming and open discussion produced initial program ideas.

The residents and project team discuss the implications of their design decisions during a design workshop.

Collaborative site analysis allowed residents to gain a better understanding of the site before beginning design.

aid. The team then presented the synthesized map of the North Lot and discussed the common design elements from the previous meeting. A pro/con exercise helped determine the location of specific elements, such as the dog area, benches (clusters versus rows), and exercise equipment. The map was then refined by community members moving around the elements and adding water features and trees. Despite the design work done for the North Lot, the City of South Gate ultimately informed the project team that a design-build project would not be possible at this time on the site.

The team then chose to focus on the North Rec. Hall, the community's second highest choice. While the property managers and owner ultimately supported the project fully, during both organization building and design the property managers asked the team to stop the project. It was only through positive dialogue and a better explanation of project goals that the team received the full support and permission for the design-build project. The conceptual plan for the North Rec. Hall was finalized on March 5, 2016, at a steering committee meeting. Six committee members discussed the consolidated conceptual plan, which had been presented to the Thunderbird Villa management, and confirmed that it reflected the desires of the general community. Committee members were then given a packet with design inspiration for a variety of the elements, materials, design styles, and construction methods. During an open discussion, members shared their thoughts and recorded their ideas and opinions in their packets, expressing a desire for elements to be low maintenance, durable, and more traditional or classic in design. They also expressed concerns about shade, maintenance, and cost.

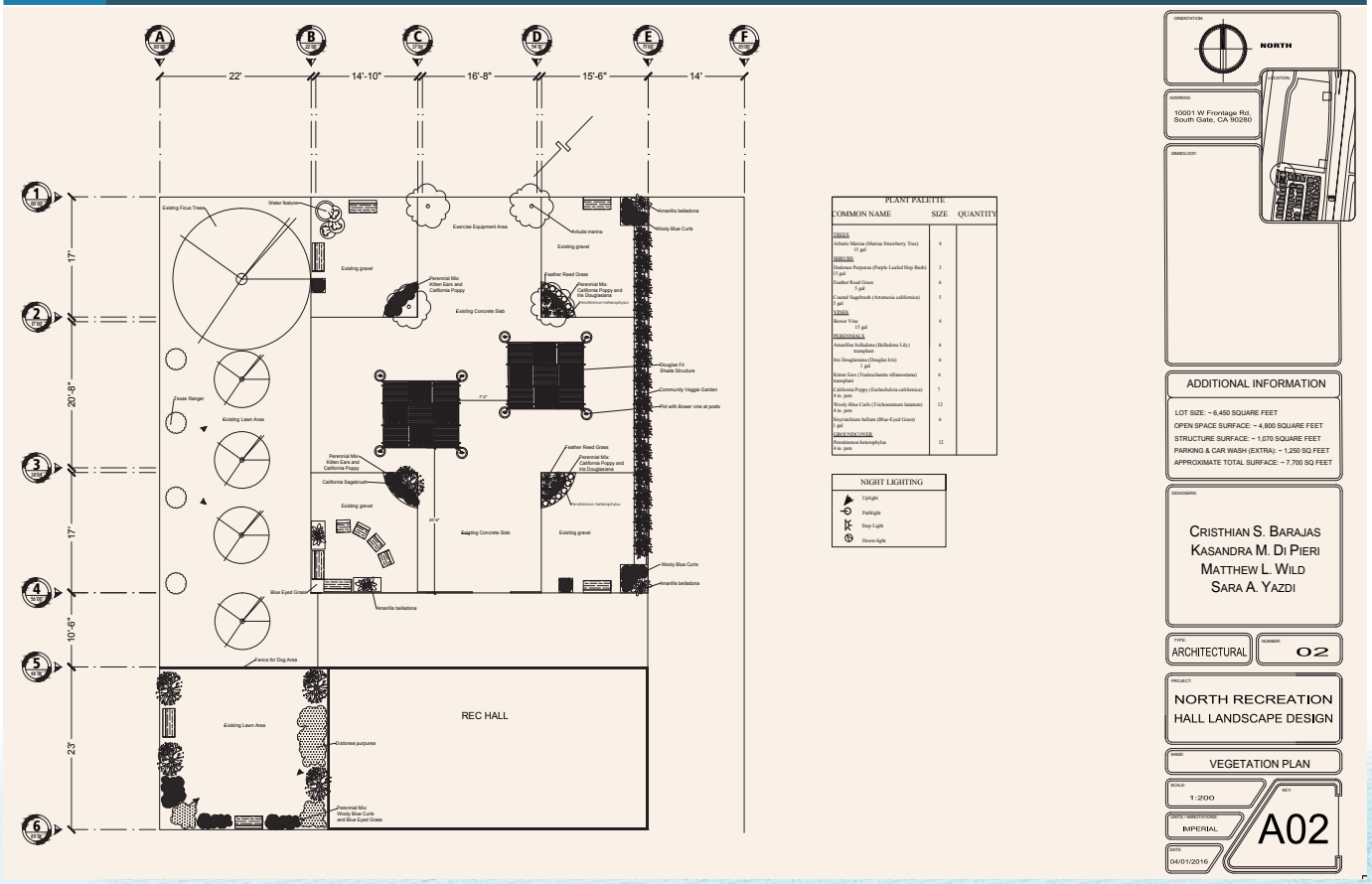
On Monday, March 14, 2016, the project team held a community meeting to refine the top choices for outdoor elements and ask questions about future maintenance. Tools used in the meeting included open discussion and a ranking exercise. At the meeting, residents were asked to walk to the North Rec. Hall and point out plants they felt were appropriate for the project. The team asked questions about the willingness of the residents to maintain site elements. Residents were also instructed to mark their top two choices for outdoor furniture (such as shade structures, benches, water features, planters, gates, and plant materials). The results were tallied by the team to finalize site details.

Following the community meeting on March 14, 2016, the team created a final site plan for the North Rec. Hall as well as construction documents that included details for each feature. Features included two shade structures, two tables with four chairs each, five benches, wooden planters, a water feature, and a gate for a dog area. A planting plan was also designed using drought tolerant, native plants. The team

then began the process of shopping for and comparing costs for materials such as lumber, hardware, plants, mulch, and a water feature.

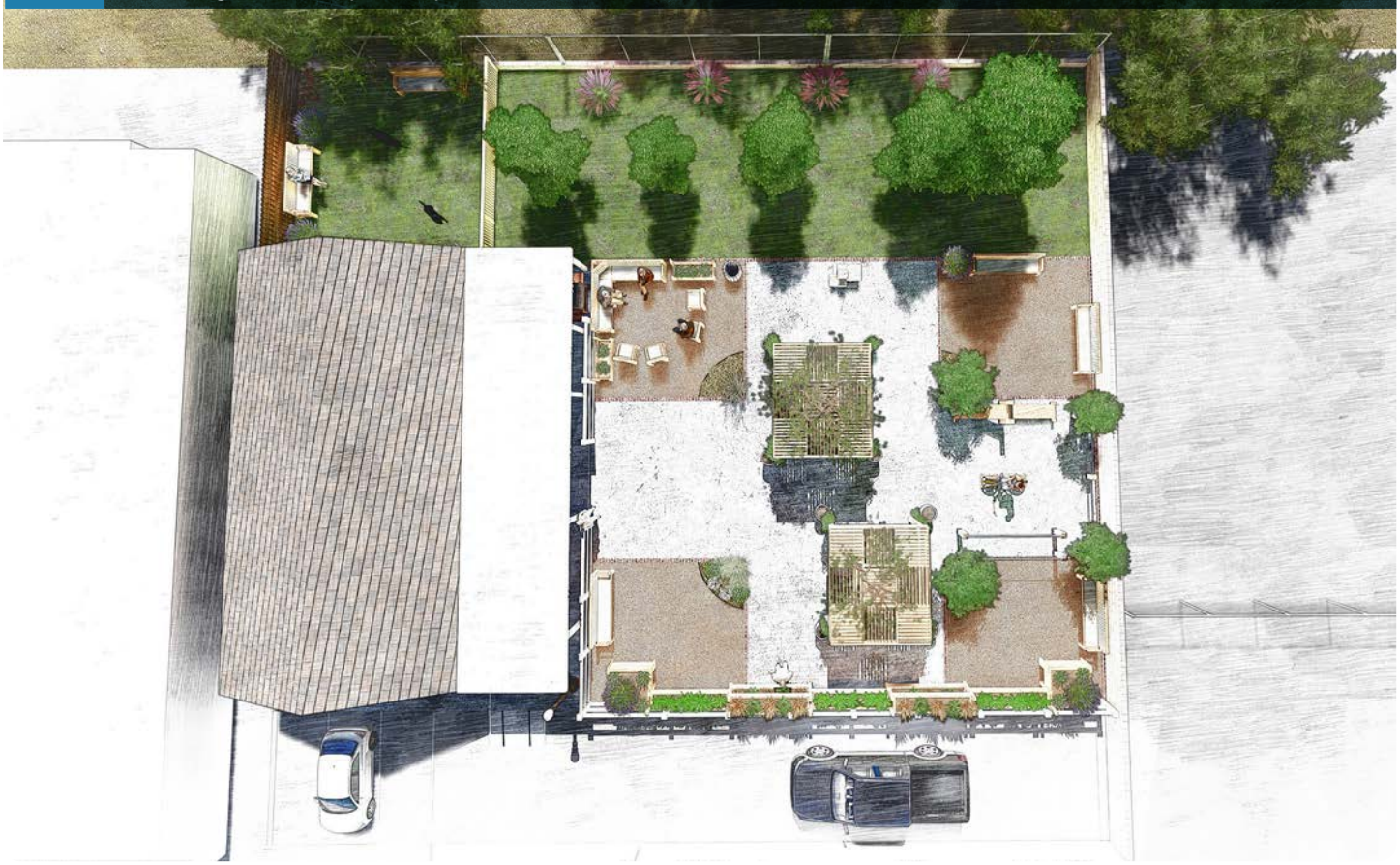
A site update meeting with the community took place on Tuesday, April 14, 2016. In this meeting, the final site plan was presented along with the construction documents, images of plants, and a schedule for construction and "community work days". The team began purchasing materials beginning the week of April 17, 2016, to build prototype features such as benches and chairs.

Figure 7.4 Landscape Design Plan of the North Rec. Hall



Rendered section of the North Rec. Hall, showing the building, seating areas, shade structures and vegetation.

Figure 7.5 Renderings of the Proposed Space



Bird's eye perspective of the shade structures.

View of the dog area looking towards the North Rec. Hall.

With the final approval of the owners and property management of Thunderbird Villa, Team South Gate and community members began the build phase of the project. Like the other two teams, the team finalized the design details to meet the $3,000 budget. Some elements were modified or removed to meet the project deadlines and budget constraints, but these modifications had limited impact on the overall design intent as expressed by the community.

Site Furnishings

The initial weeks and weekends of the build process were focused on building furniture. This focus provided an excellent opportunity for the team and committee to work out the construction process and how to most effectively involve community members. During these first few weekends, the project team and the community assembled, stained, and installed furniture which had been collaboratively designed during design workshops. This effort resulted in the construction and installation of five benches, two tables, and eight chairs made from Douglas fir, sanded and then stained with redwood colored transparent weather-proofing deck stain.

Initial construction of each site element began with a prototype in the 606 Studio shop, to refine the initial design for cost and time efficiency. Once the designs were fully refined, the project team brought partially and fully built furniture to the site, along with materials for the remaining furnishings.

During work days, which generally ran from 9:30 a.m. until 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., participants joined intermittently throughout the day, allowing for easy management of tasks and a steady stream of enthusiastic participants. While at some times only one or two community members were present, at other times upwards of ten participants joined the project team in staining, sanding, cutting, and assembling the site furnishings. During the woodworking portions of the build, only one or two community members could support the student team at a time, so the students and community members worked as partners on specific tasks.

The project team found building prototypes in the shop helped prepare for community work days.

Community members enjoyed putting the finishing touches on furniture while sanding and staining.

Working on site furnishings brought the community and students closer together.

Dog Area

During the weekends of May 14 and 21, 2016, the project team and the community built, sanded and stained a 28 foot fence in the southwest corner of the project site. This three foot tall fence was designed to create an enclosed space for the community.

The project team and participants spent the first day marking out and digging holes for the fence posts. Concrete was poured and allowed to set overnight. The following day the fence construction was completed, including a three foot gate which was constructed using half lap joints to prevent sagging. This detail was suggested, designed, and built by one of the community members from Thunderbird Villa.

Over the next week and weekend, residents enthusiastically came to the project site to finish sanding and staining the fence. To finish the dog area, the project team and community created signs to remind residents to pick up after their pets, and built a pet waste bag dispenser.

Fence posts for the dog area are set into concrete footings.

A community member assembles the gate that he designed.

The dog area was a group effort that provided a separate area for dog owners and their pets.

Shade Structure

The focus of the community gathering space was two shade structures in the existing barren concrete space. Together the project team and the community built and raised the structures. An original design for a larger shade structure was modified due to permitting challenges and costs. Instead, the team and community built two 12' x 10' shade structures using Douglas fir lumber and the redwood tone transparent wood stain.

The project team and participants spent days leading up to the construction staining hundreds of pieces of lumber prior to assembly. As mentioned earlier, the staining process was great for community members of all ages and abilities. The posts for the shade structure were marked out and mounted using surface mounting post bases by a community member with construction and building experience. Working under his guidance, the project team attached sandwich beams to the posts and raised them up two at a time. Identifying community members' skills ahead of time proved crucial to working efficiently and effectively on work days.

Meanwhile, on the ground, participants and students laid out and assembled the joists and 2" x 2" lumber. Once the posts were raised and mounted, the top portion of the shade structure was assembled. The shade structure was then lifted onto the posts and beams. Youth from a community building organization in Boyle Heights joined the participants from Thunderbird Villa, and together the group performed a barn-raising to get both shade structures into place. Raising the top pieces proved challenging but all participants found a role for themselves, whether by physically lifting, supporting the lifters with verbal guidance, moving ladders, or holding the posts steady.

Though the physical effort of lifting the shade structure into place was a struggle for all (both young and old), in the end, both structures were raised and completed. The presence of these two vertical elements quickly and dramatically changed the once inhospitable space.

Staining lumber for the shade structure brings out laughter and collegiality among community members.

Residents of all skill levels take part in raising the shade structure.

Building the shade structure brought community members together to make a space a place.

Plants and Planters

After completing the shade structure, the project team and the community built two raised vegetable beds and five brick-lined planter spaces. The community had requested space to cultivate vegetables, so they collaborated with the project team to design and build raised beds which would be more accessible for the older residents of Thunderbird Villa.

The project team worked with residents to develop a plant palette for the project that would bring color and fragrance to the space, but would also be low maintenance and drought tolerant. The project team was able to reduce costs by acquiring plants through donations from multiple nurseries who were excited to share some of their stock with a community-led volunteer project for seniors. Additionally, community members were eager to contribute plants from their own yards which consisted of a variety of succulents, and *Amarillis belladonis* (naked ladies).

During the final weekends of the build process, residents worked with the project team to dig holes and plant and water dozens of plants including a variety of sage, rosemary, and bougainvillea vines which will climb perimeter walls and the shade structures. To fill the raised vegetable planters, the project team brought a yard of fill soil from a local cemetery, mulch from the City of South Gate (from the North Lot), and manure donated by Jim Meyer from Trails4All. One of the community members had expertise working with plants in a nursery and helped prepare an optimal blend of soil for the raised vegetable planters. Again, identifying and utilizing community expertise provided many benefits throughout the project.

Established trees help create immediate shade.

Raised vegetable beds are easier for seniors to use.

Aloe vera plants donated by residents line the eastern wall of the North Rec. Hall.

Exercise Equipment

Residents expressed the desire to have the community gathering space function for active as well as passive recreation. Together with the project team, the community selected and designed exercise equipment for the space. During the final weeks of the build process, residents and community members gathered at the project site and constructed the exercise equipment. The equipment consisted of two pieces. The first piece was a pair of parallel bars which were ten feet long. The second piece was a multi-purpose area where residents could do push-ups, sit-ups, and various other exercises using one of two inclined platforms.

Community member expertise was crucial to the assembling and mounting of the exercise equipment, which were built from Douglas fir lumber and galvanized metal pipe.

A resident tests the parallel bars.

The parallel bars allow users to support themselves and strengthen their arms.

The North Rec. Hall exercise equipment improvements.

Figure 7.6 North Rec. Hall: Before and After

Before

After

Figure 7.6 North Rec. Hall: Before and After

Before

After

Before

After

FUTURE PLANS FOR THUNDERBIRD VILLA

7.6

The long-term project is an extension of the community and the project team's vision for the design-build project. It will serve as a bridge between what was achieved in the design-build phase and the long-term, large scale projects planned by the city for land adjacent to Thunderbird Villa. As part of the long-term project planning, the team recruited a new partner organization to assist the community after the team graduated. The team also created tools for the community and the partner to use in advocating for their project.

While the short-term built project addressed the neighborhood's needs for shade, a community gardening space, a dog area, and an outdoor exercise area, one or more larger projects are needed to address the community's need for safe, accessible, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing sidewalks and paths for daily walking.

The following larger projects sites were identified by the community and team:

- LADWP power line right-of-way
- North Lot
- Internal streets of Thunderbird Villa
- Frontage Road

The community expressed a need and desire for:

- Walking paths
- Hiking trails
- Sidewalks
- Seating areas

Frontage Road

LADWP Power Line Corridor

The North Lot

Internal streets of Thunderbird Villa

Partner Organization: Trails4All

Team South Gate worked to foster a partnership between the community of Thunderbird Villa and Trails4All to develop and implement this project. Trails4All has agreed to fulfill the role that the project team has been playing, including:

- Organizing—setting the calendar of meetings; creating and distributing meeting announcements; following up announcements with calls and visits.
- Facilitation—planning agendas and preparing materials for steering committee meetings, community meetings and community design workshops; facilitating meetings and workshops.
- Project Management—gathering support from local government and landowners including site control and required permissions and permits; seeking project funding; coordinating and collaborating with other entities working in the surrounding area and identifying potential partners.
- Design—developing each subsequent stage of the design (construction documents) to fully reflect the community's desires and needs (or recruiting/hiring participatory designers to do this work).

Trails4All is a non-profit organization that strives to bring trails to urban cities for non-motorized vehicle users: equestrians, bikers, and hikers. Trails4All consists of regional trail experts who are "dedicated to the creation, restoration, and preservation of trails and surrounding wilderness in Southern California" (Trails4All, 2015). Trails4All supports projects that envision the large scale planning of trails for non-motorized vehicle users. The organization designs master plans for bikeways, designs and constructs trails, and partners with high schools to create

Trails4All director, Jim Meyer (far right), visits with residents at Thunderbird Villa.

Trails4All is a 501 c(3) non-profit organization.

youth education programs. For each project, Jim Meyer, the executive director, puts together an ad-hoc committee of trail users to ensure they receive multiple viewpoints on how the trail should be designed. Input is gathered from equestrians, hikers, and cyclists. Jim Meyer is generally responsible for the trail design.

Trails4All also helps to work with developers to increase connectivity between trails and existing buildings. Trails4All helps with trail planning and creation, trail restoration, trail/watershed clean up, private trail work days, trail management training and a student leadership and education program named Partnerships4Trails. They help in building, maintaining, and improving trails across Southern California. Team South Gate chose this organization as a partner organization because they felt that their goals closely matched the goals of the long-term project.

Trails4All receives funding through grants which vary depending on the project and its size and scope. The organization accepts donations and sponsorships and is supported by a number of organizations and volunteers.

Past notable projects by Trails4All include their involvement with the Heritage Museum of Orange County, which consists of 11 acres of land including 4.5 acres of undisturbed land, some of which was preserved as wetlands. Trails4All manages the Wetlands Recovery Program and is partnered with Godinez High School which is on the same lot as the museum, so that students can perform community service hours. Trails4All helped to facilitate the Partnerships4Trails student program at Letha Raney Intermediate School. The group also helped to construct the trails in the Cleveland National Forest. Other notable projects include the master plan for Coyote Creek Bikeway, which won an award, and the design and construction of trails in Santiago Oaks Wilderness Park, after the Windy Ridge fire.

Workshops

Two workshops were conducted on May 18 and 25, 2016, to facilitate community involvement in the long-term plan. The first workshop also served as a way to introduce the community to the partner organization's executive director, Jim Meyer. During this meeting, the community was reintroduced to the four sites they chose as potential locations for improvements in the design-build phase. Members were divided into two groups and given a large base map of four project locations, then encouraged to design all four spaces. While some community members did not have any detailed input on the design of each possible site, they did give the team direction for developing draft designs.

Concerns included the proposed I-710 freeway sound wall, coyotes, homeless people, and the lack of sidewalks. The team proposed having internal one-way streets in Thunderbird Villa, but the community expressed concerns about this. Another group of community members had a detailed design for one of the sites (the area under the LADWP power lines).

Although three design workshops were originally scheduled, the participation process had to be shortened due to time constraints. In the end, two workshops were sufficient as the goal of this process was to create a range of concept plans for more detailed development in the future. At the second workshop, held the following week on May 25, 2016, the

The Coyote Creek Bikeway and Santiago Oaks Wilderness Park are two of the major projects which Trails4All has worked on in the past (Trails4All, 2016).

team presented their three draft designs to the community for feedback. Although the community members did not comment on each plan, they were excited about the conceptual plan presented for each site and did not want anything removed. Instead, the community expressed a desire for benches on Frontage Road, and two-way streets with different pavement patterns and with only one curbless sidewalk on internal streets and Frontage Road. The residents also were strongly opposed to one-way traffic on the internal streets of Thunderbird Villa.

Conceptual Plans

The final schematic plans consist of designs for four sites: Frontage Road, the LADWP power line right-of-way, the North Lot, and the internal streets of Thunderbird Villa. These sites were initially selected during the site selection walk for the short-term project. The team chose to develop conceptual plans for the four sites to give the community and partner organization, Trails4All, options for moving forward depending on site funding availability.

Thunderbird Villa community residents and Jim Meyer, executive director of Trails4All, in a design workshop.

Figure 7.7 Plan View of the Four Sites

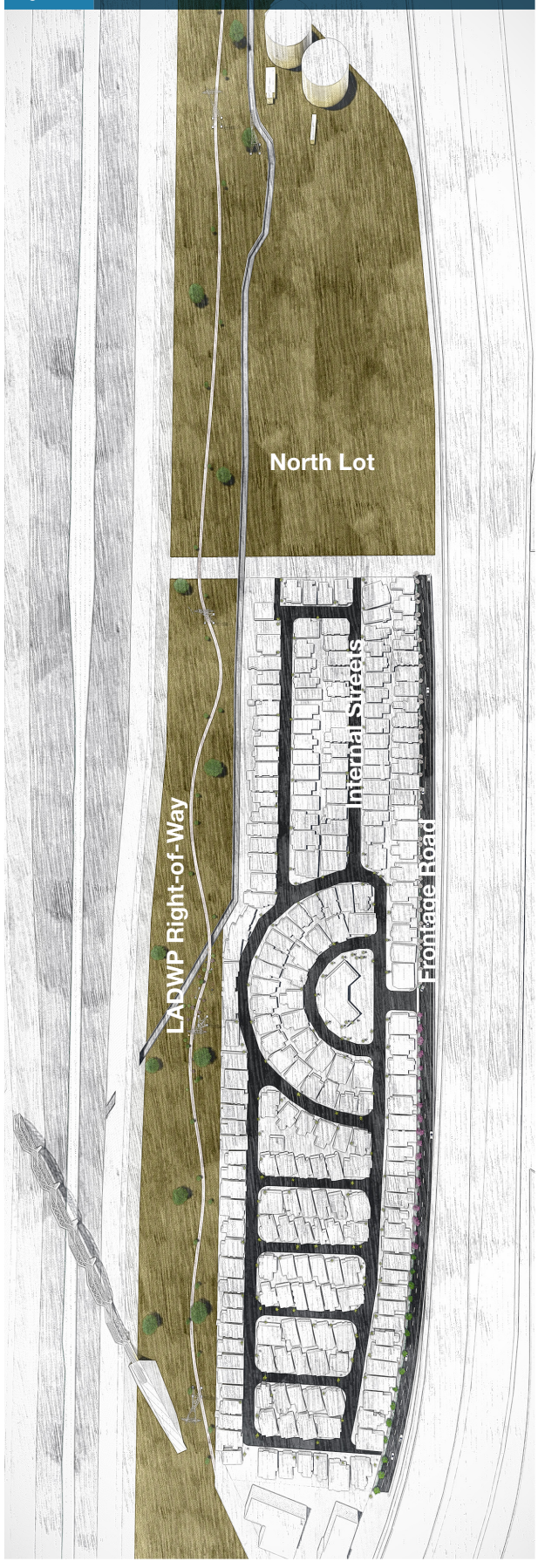


Figure 7.8 Section of the Northern Portion of Frontage Road

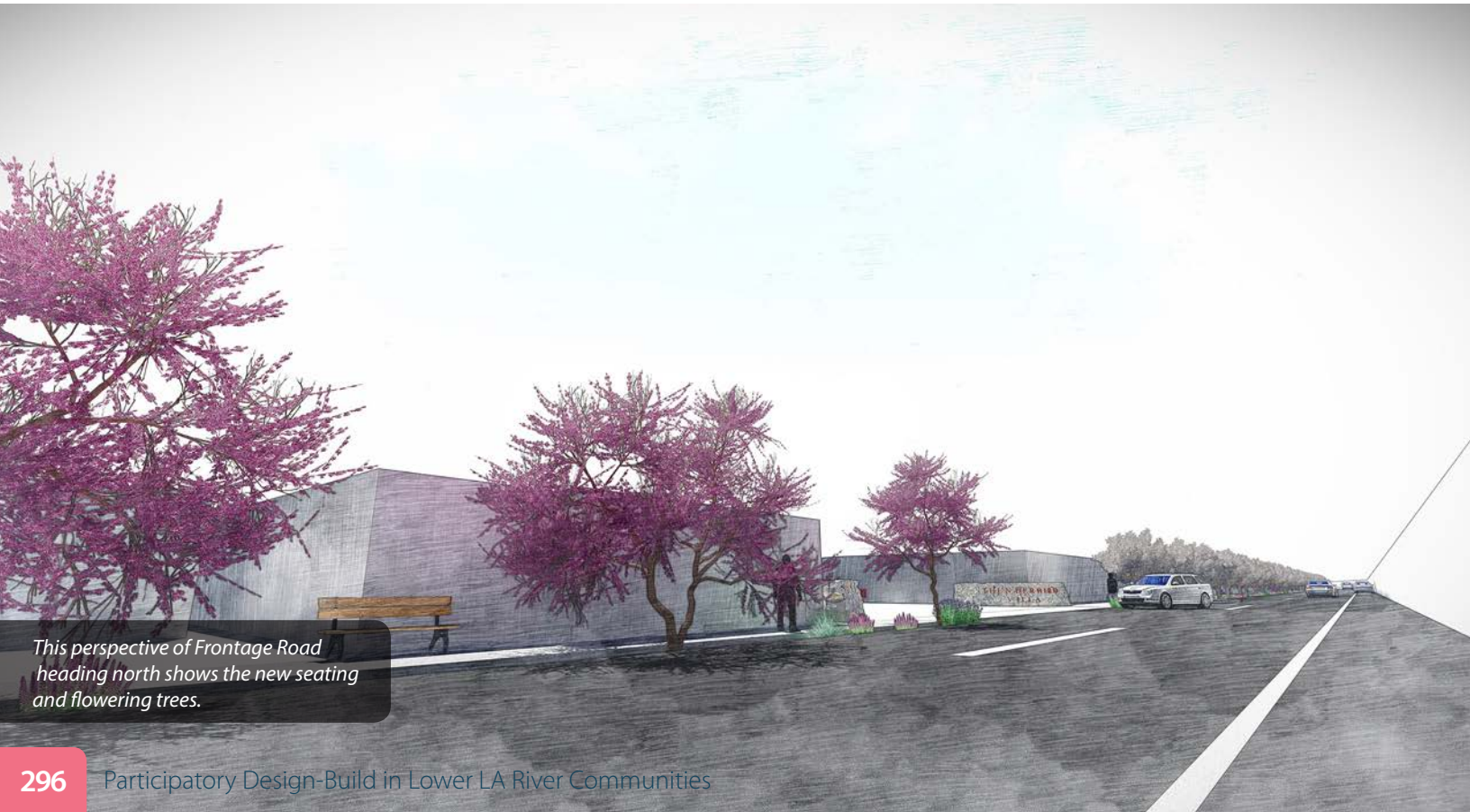
Figure 7.9 Section of the Southern Portion of Frontage Road

Frontage Road

Frontage Road is the street directly outside of Thunderbird Villa. It is used as a two-way street with parking available on either side. Residents of Thunderbird Villa use it to walk their dogs and travel to convenience stores on Garfield Avenue. There are currently no formal sidewalks on the street. There is a chain-link fence on the eastern side of the street, separating it from the I-710 freeway.

Design Objectives:

- To provide shade for residents as they walk along the street.
- To provide multiple shaded seating locations for residents as they walk along the street.
- To provide a designated and secure walking area for residents to walk their dogs.
- To provide an opportunity for recreation in the form of walking and/or jogging.
- To improve drainage, infiltrate and clean stormwater, and provide a buffer between pedestrians and oncoming traffic with bioswales and selected planting.
- To decrease the flow and speed of vehicular traffic by decreasing the width of the street.
- To provide attractive yet water-wise landscape design on a large scale.



This perspective of Frontage Road heading north shows the new seating and flowering trees.

Constraints:

- The proposed I-710 freeway sound wall is on opposite sides of the street to the north and south.
- The sidewalk and proposed sound wall is estimated to reduce the width of the south side of the street by up to 8 feet in some places, eliminating a parking lane.
- The width of the street is irregular. It is narrower at the south, making it difficult to provide a parking lane.
- Frontage Road is directly adjacent to the I-710 freeway.
- The area is dominated by impervious surface and lacks infiltration.
- The width of the street encourages high speeds.

Opportunities:

- Frontage Road is a blank slate: there are no sidewalks or planting.
- The street is wide and can be narrowed to accommodate amenities.

Frontage Road can provide shade and sitting areas for pedestrians. The proposed design addresses the need for improved pedestrian access and circulation.

The proposed design includes four to five foot sidewalks on the west side of the street. The sidewalk width is adjusted on the south side of the street in relation to Thunderbird Villa as the proposed sound wall will reduce the existing street width by eight feet. Bioswales are incorporated along the sidewalk for drainage and to accommodate native plants with colored foliage suited for bioswales in Southern California. There is a parking lane on one side of the street for visitors and overnight guests of Thunderbird Villa.

LADWP Power Line Right-of-Way

This right-of-way is currently owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Unlike many LADWP right-of-ways, there is no current secondary usage for the space. The space is littered with refuse and most current use is by homeless people who access the area from the LA River or the western side of the river via the train trestle bridge.

Figure 7.10 Plan View of Thunderbird Villa's Entrance

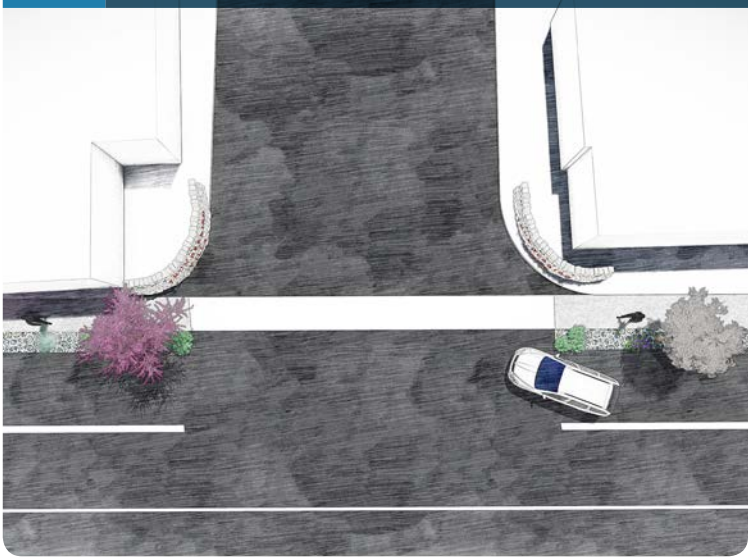


Figure 7.11 Northern Portion of Frontage Road

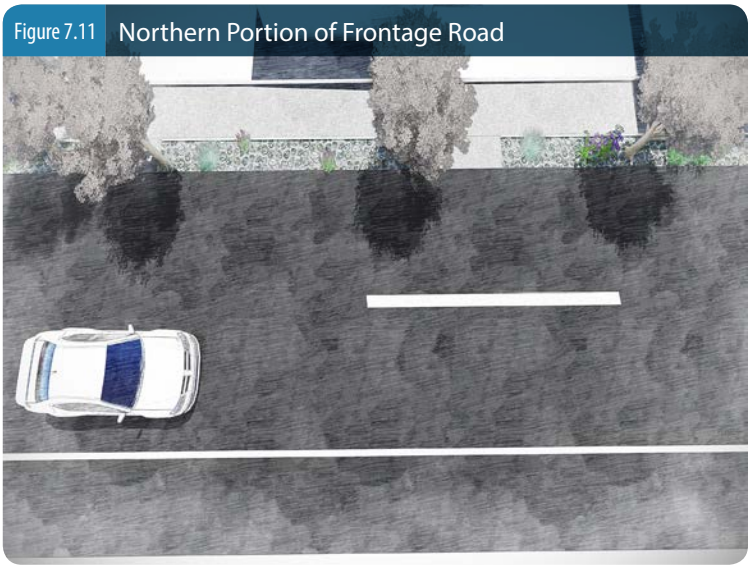


Figure 7.12 Southern Portion of Frontage Road

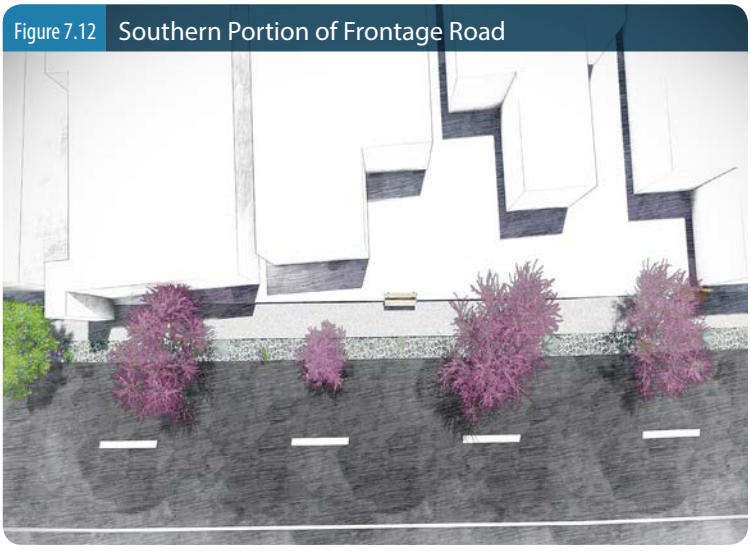


Figure 7.13 Bird's Eye View of LADWP Power Line Trail

Figure 7.14 Vegetation Along the LADWP Power Line Trail

Figure 7.15 Walking Path in the North Lot

Design Objectives:

- To provide multi-purpose trails for residents of Thunderbird Villa and the community of South Gate for recreation and exercise.
- To provide multiple viewpoints along the LA River and power line corridor.
- To provide direct access to the LA River for residents of Thunderbird Villa.

Constraints:

- Obtaining secondary use of LADWP right-of-way is a long process which involves many steps.
- Some Thunderbird Villa residents are resistant to using the space for fear of crime, homeless people, and wild animals such as coyotes.

Opportunities:

- Views from the space are very dynamic and interesting looking towards the trestle bridge, LA River, and power lines above.
- It is a huge open space with immediate connections to the LA River.
- Thunderbird homes back up directly onto the space.

The proposed space will provide multipurpose trails along the power line corridor along with small trees and drought tolerant shrubs. There will be exercise equipment along the trails, and views that will connect trail-users to the LA River.

North Lot

The North Lot is currently owned by the City of South Gate and is being used as a construction disposal site for branches and debris.

The view from the trestle bridge crossing the LA River will include the improved right-of-way with its new tree canopy and trails.

Design Objectives:

- To provide an immediate connection to bike trails along the LA River.
- To provide multipurpose trails for residents of Thunderbird Villa and South Gate.
- To provide viewpoints along the hiking trails.
- To increase opportunities for fitness in a safe and secure space.
- To provide an open space for passive and active recreation.

Constraints:

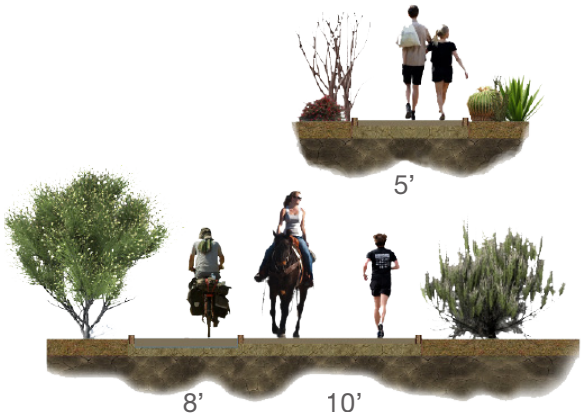
- The Urban Orchard project is a long-term project which already seeks to use the space.
- The site is currently used by the city to deposit green waste from city trees. It will require significant cleanup before any vegetation can be planted or trails created.

Opportunities:

- Many future projects are located in the surrounding area, offering potential connections and synergies.
- The City of South Gate has already designated the area for civic use, which means there are opportunities for open space and recreation.
- The lot is large.

The proposed North Lot design includes facilities such as restrooms and security in the form of cameras and gates. The area will feature walking and biking trails with native plants and gardens. An exercise circuit course will be found at select locations along the trails. Shade trees and benches will provide users with places to rest with protection from the sun. Informational signage will be used to inform users about the history and ecology of the area and the LA River, as well as future projects for the site. Viewpoints will be incorporated along the walking trails.

Figure 7.16 Section of the Proposed Trails



The residents brainstormed their ideas for the North Lot over base maps.

The new tree canopy and sidewalks will slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety.

The proposed solution for the internal streets of Thunderbird borrows principles from woonerfs like this street. (Furman, 2016).

Internal Streets

The internal streets of Thunderbird Villa are shared by pedestrians and car traffic. Currently pedestrians are forced to walk on the outside of parked cars or in the middle of the street. The width of the streets vary: north-south streets are 28 feet and east-west streets are 23 feet wide. There are currently no sidewalks. There are no signs to slow traffic, or traffic calming measures. The streets are not named. This makes wayfinding difficult for drivers as well as pedestrians who are not familiar with the neighborhood.

Design Objectives:

- To develop pedestrian-friendly streets for Thunderbird Villa residents through shared street designs.
- To improve safety in the area by creating sidewalks as an integral component of a pedestrian-friendly street system.
- To recommend design guidelines that provide optimal use of the existing street system.
- To design a livable street where neighbors meet and residents go for walks with their dogs.

Constraints:

- There are no signs or traffic calming measures on the internal streets.
- The streets are very narrow (north-south streets are 28 feet and east-west street are 23 feet wide). There is no room for raised sidewalks for pedestrians, and the street is shared by pedestrians and cars.

Opportunities:

- Slower traffic speeds and safer pedestrian environments result from narrow streets.
- Thunderbird Villa owns the streets.

Two different options are proposed for the internal streets. Option one is based on woonerf or “living yard” concept. According to Steinberg (2015), woonerfs are residential streets shared by pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles, with pedestrians having priority over cars. Since the street has no continuous curb, there is not a clear barrier or separation between pedestrians and cars. This means motorists are forced to slow down and travel with caution. Doing this creates more space for other features in the

street such as street furniture in the form of planters, street trees and benches as well as areas to promote social interaction (Collarte, 2012).

Some of the features incorporated in the design are:

- Two-way streets
- Sidewalks on both sides at street level with materials demarcated by different pavement.
- Plants with colored foliage.
- Shared paved space for pedestrians and motor vehicles.
- Landscaping and street furniture.

This option minimizes the use of traffic signs and separation between the road and the sidewalk. This option also mixes social activities with traffic. The primary concern with this design is its high cost and maintenance (Steinberg, 2015).

Option two has two-way streets with one 4' to 5' sidewalk at street level. The sidewalk can be separated from car traffic with striping, coloring or pavement.

Figure 7.17 Section of Option One

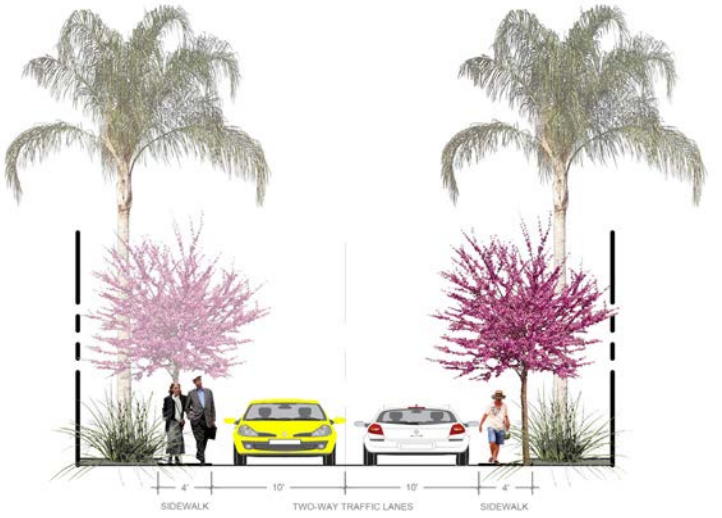
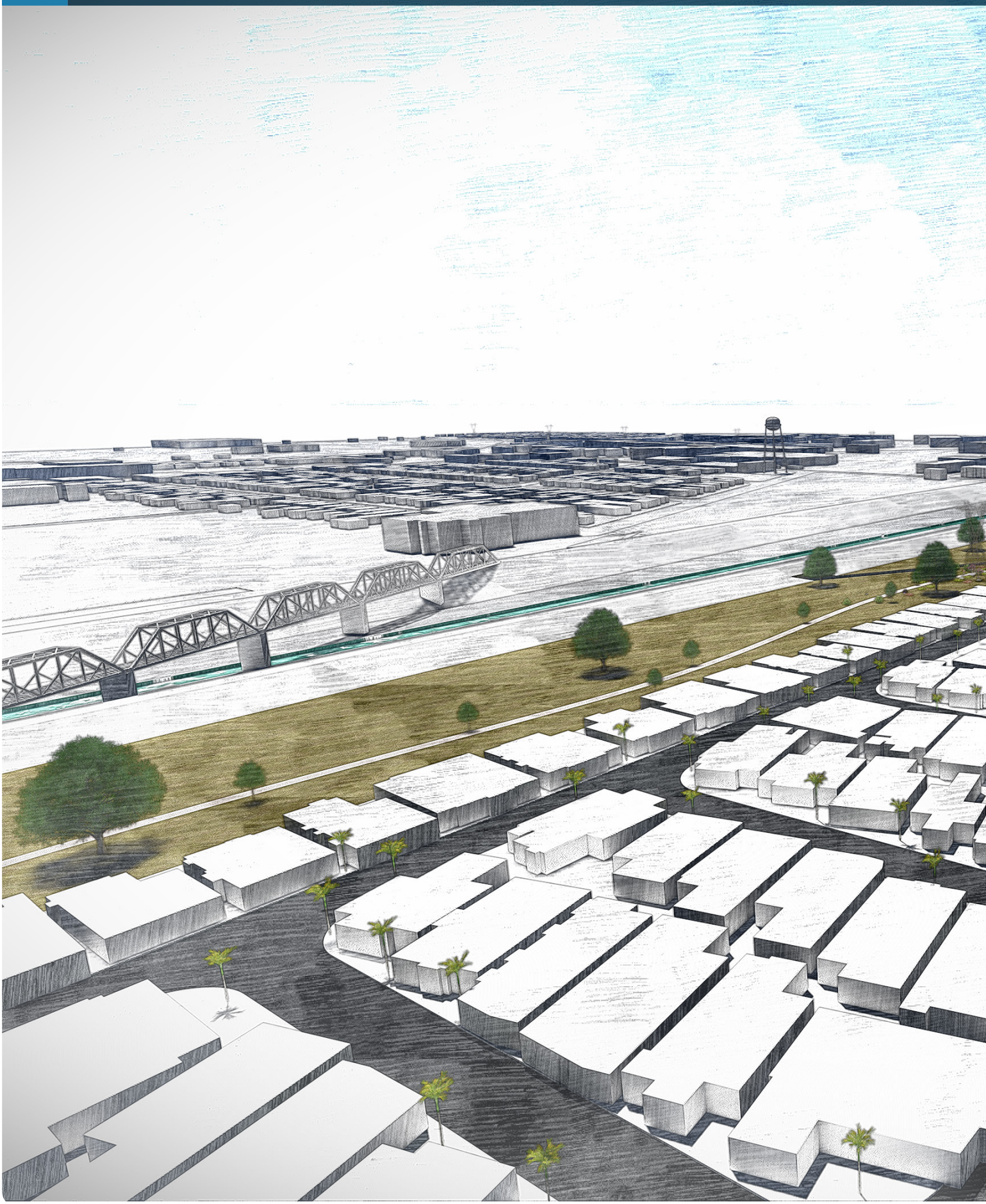


Figure 7.18 Section of Option Two

Street calming measures such as tree planters and pavement changes are modeled after woonerfs.

Woonerfs are designed to accommodate all modes of movement and transportation (NACTO, 2016).

Figure 7.19 Bird's Eye View of the Long-Term Project



7.7

Like the teams from Cudahy and Bell, one of the greatest challenges that Team South Gate faced was working to get approval and support from the city government. The team had positive experiences meeting with the city for the use of the North Lot, however the application and review process was lengthy and prevented the team from moving forward. Later, when designing the shade structure, the team had to negotiate with the city about designs and permitting costs, and ultimately modify the design to eliminate the need for city approval.

Working in a private community meant the management and owners had control. While the property managers and owner ultimately supported the project fully, during both organization building and design the property managers asked the team to stop the project. It was only through positive dialogue and a better explanation of project goals that the team received full support and permission for the design-build project. This final result revealed a key advantage of working in a private community--to develop neighborhood spaces you only have to convince the owners, not an entire city bureaucracy.

Team South Gate experienced a deep sense of camaraderie working alongside the Thunderbird Villa community. Developing relationships over the course of the project was meaningful for both the students and the neighbors, and during the process the generation gap closed. During the participatory process, it became clear to the project team the power of collaborating on design with those being served. This process forged relationships between students and community members, promoted a dialogue about design and the environment, and capitalized on the combined knowledge and experience of the local community and the students. The design-build project was an incredible learning experience for the student team and the community. The necessarily iterative process demonstrated the challenges of turning the will, needs, and ideas of many into a coherent built design.

LESSONS LEARNED

Team Cudahy discusses landscape ordinances with the property renter and city mayor. For all teams, working with cities proved to be a necessary challenge.

MILAGRO

INTRODUCTION

8.1

Following the completion of the projects, the 606 team reflected on their experiences, successes, failures, and final outcomes. In many instances, the three teams gained similar insights from this process. In others, while the teams encountered similar challenges, the solutions they found were different. To the extent that lessons vary from group to group, this highlights the ways in which context, location, and individual investigator's perspectives and experience help to shape understanding and inform analysis. A site's ownership (public or private), for example, greatly affected the challenges that groups experienced, and was thus one of the important factors determining each team's lessons. The common theme throughout, however, was the need for community buy-in to overcome challenges and move projects toward completion.

It is important to note that the 606 team's goal was to document and share their experience during this process, rather than to generalize lessons for all participatory design work. The audience should carefully consider any appropriate alternatives in terms of the approaches, methods, strategies and solutions described here.

Community members, students, and professors discuss the lessons to emerge from the project.

Initial Recruitment

Despite the well-documented literature asserting that canvassing is an effective means of leadership development, teams experienced mixed results utilizing this method.

Teams Bell and Cudahy both found the canvassing process to be useful introductions to their communities, but were unsuccessful at developing project leadership through this method. Of Team Cudahy's consistent steering committee members, only one was recruited through the canvassing process. The other members learned of the project during team presentations at city council meetings, were recommended to the team by other local groups during interviews, or learned of the project later through initial recruits. It is worth noting that in the team's initial committee meeting, five of the six participants were recruited via the canvassing process. The loss of these members was a combination of relocation (two members) and attrition (two members). The attrition may have been the result of the team's poor ability to communicate the project's intended outcomes early in the project. This highlights the need for designers to be able to clearly communicate project outcomes early in the process in a way that will not intimidate or offend those who may not share common interests with the project.

While canvassing was an informative introduction to neighborhoods, it seldom led to the recruitment of steering committee members.

It should be noted that recruiting leadership through speaking at city council meetings and receiving recommendations from other local groups led to the formation of a steering committee that was highly politically involved. While these members were able to navigate local politics, it is possible that this may have diminished the project's gains related to social capital creation and leadership development, as the committee members were politically active prior to the project. This reality also led

Speaking at city council meetings attracted new, politically active participants to the project.

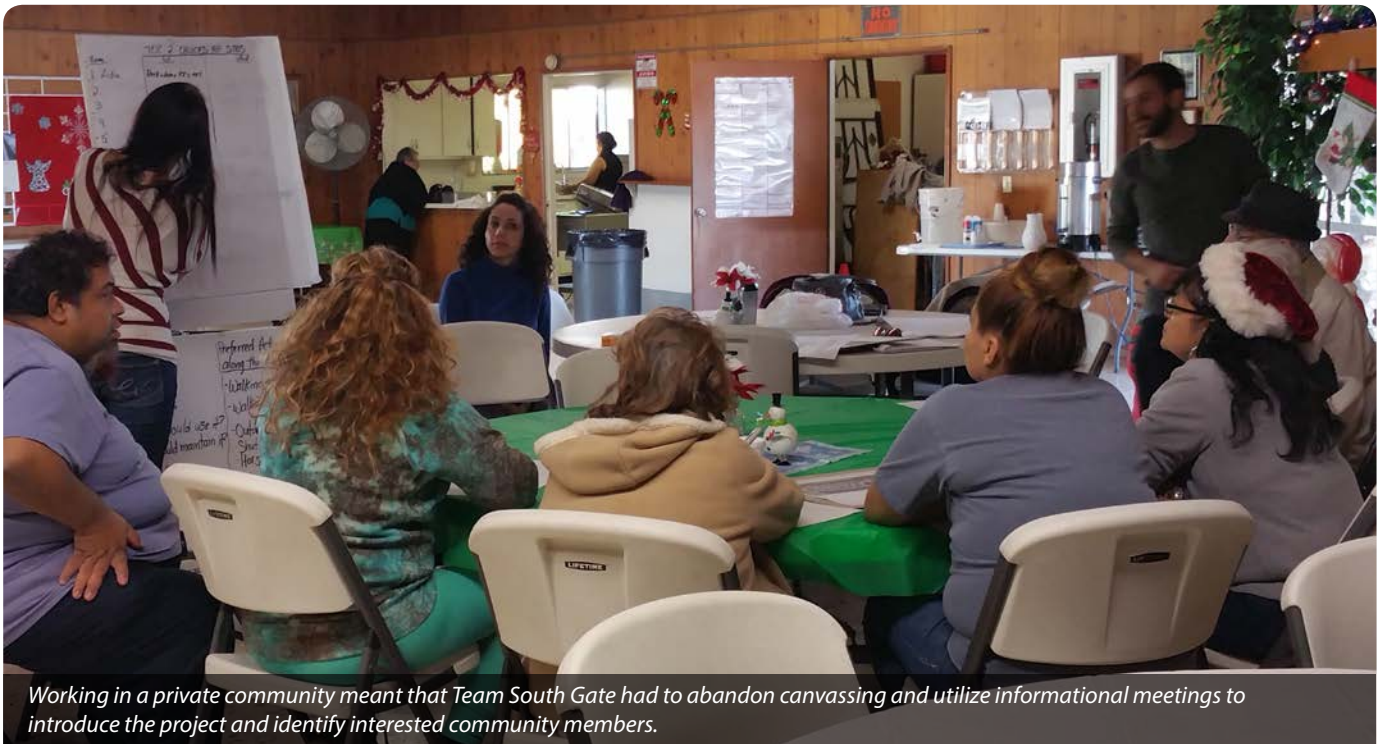
to a group that was politically divided prior to the project's inception. Nevertheless, these committee members put aside their feuds for the sake of the project and worked together, with one commenting that, "Because of this project, I'm talking to people I normally would never talk to." Thus, while designers should be conscious of local political divides, participants can be united through this process.

Team South Gate's canvassing efforts were quickly put to a halt by the property's management, leading them to determine that it would have been preferable to speak to the management before canvassing in the private neighborhood. Even prior to this encounter, however, canvassing was met with hostility, as residents considered strangers knocking on their door to be highly invasive. This led the team to conclude that participatory designers must be aware of the standard ways in which neighborhoods communicate. Likely due to the fact that Thunderbird Villa is a private community, distributing flyers turned out to be a more successful method. As one student noted, "the mailbox is their door."

Team South Gate thus decided to hold an informational meeting to recruit members, and concluded that this was a more effective approach to community outreach than canvassing in this neighborhood. This meeting reached a larger group of people in a shorter amount of time, lowered apprehension levels, built trust, and explained their goals in the neighborhood. Holding an informational meeting as the first form of community outreach also enabled the team to gain a clearer idea of who might be strong candidates for the steering committee based on their interest level, leadership qualities, and ability to work as part of a team.

Team Bell had a similar experience to Team Cudahy—also recruiting very few members through canvassing. While some residents showed interest during this process, any actual discussion of leadership elicited quick refusals. Holding meetings near the neighborhood's busiest intersection, displaying a large banner, providing refreshments, and utilizing a canopy were the strongest aids in ensuring steady participation at Team Bell's meetings.

The team concluded that an early informational meeting, similar to that of Team South Gate's, would have been beneficial, and that by placing community meetings before steering committee meetings, they might have been able to identify the most active and interested participants as likely steering committee members. Team members also felt that going door-to-door was a haphazard approach, and that engaging people walking along Randolph Avenue or the Los Angeles River would have given the team a greater chance of identifying interested residents by targeting users of these spaces.



Working in a private community meant that Team South Gate had to abandon canvassing and utilize informational meetings to introduce the project and identify interested community members.

Outreach materials should be designed with the community in mind. Team South Gate found that their earlier outreach materials (left) were overly complex for their 55-plus community, and switched to a simpler aesthetic (right).

— THE 606 DESIGN STUDIO

It is worth noting that few members of the 606 team had previous experience developing leadership through canvassing. This fact, rather than a flaw with the method, may explain the 606 teams' poor results utilizing this practice. Organizations utilizing this approach should therefore consider their designers' familiarity and proficiency with canvassing before choosing to employ the tactic. In instances where a group will be engaged in participatory design for the long term, it is likely advisable to create a training program to coach designers in developing this skill.

Continuing Recruitment

All groups agreed that it was challenging yet important to find ways to incorporate new members as the projects progressed. This necessitated flexibility with these new participants and an extra effort to incorporate them into the process in ways that integrated them quickly into the project. If done successfully, this can avoid questions about the project's intent, feasibility, funding, or other topics which have been resolved in previous meetings.

While Team South Gate found that existing members were able to effectively familiarize these new participants, this delayed the ongoing meeting. As Team Bell located their meetings in well-trafficked public locations with the intent of attracting new participants, the team assigned a specific member to familiarize new participants. Team Cudahy addressed this problem by reviewing the previous week's proceedings at the beginning of each meeting, although this was an incomplete explanation of the project's long term goals and methods. For this reason, the team decided it might be advisable to create a brief summary sheet for newcomers.

With regards to materials, all teams agreed that it is important to develop outreach materials with the specific community in mind. Team South Gate found that seniors respond differently to outreach materials, and that to reach them effectively it was important to create simple designs with large font sizes and easy to read text. All teams agreed that having outreach materials in English and Spanish was necessary to ensure reaching the area's Spanish speaking majority and to promote an atmosphere of inclusion.

Meeting Locations

Teams were surprised to realize the ways in which meeting locations were inextricably linked to politics and relations of power. The process of finding potential locations for meetings was fraught with unexpected political challenges.

After Team Bell requested the use of a meeting space inside a local social club to hold their first meeting, the elected official who manages the club called a meeting the same night, and incorporated the team's meeting into his larger meeting. Thus, rather than serving as its own independent meeting, the team's meeting occurred as a small part of the council member's. The project thus appeared to be under his control in the eyes of participants. In order to avoid repeating this experience, Team Bell chose to hold meetings near a busy neighborhood intersection. This proved to be fortuitous as it quickly became the means by which the team attracted participants.

Team Cudahy chose to conduct committee meetings in a committee member's home because the use of city facilities required reservations far in advance and the payment of fees. While this location gave the meetings a local, intimate atmosphere, it also alienated some members due to political conflicts with the homeowners, causing some potential members to refuse to attend.

Team South Gate found success in utilizing existing neighborhood gathering spaces. As a private community, Thunderbird Villa has a central meeting space called the Thunderbird Recreation Room. The property management allowed the team to meet with residents in this space, generally on weekday evenings and Saturday mornings. Using an already familiar space that was central to all residents was very successful. Keeping the location in the same place at the same time created consistency that was integral to maintaining attendance.

Participatory designers considering potential meeting locations should avoid sites mired in territoriality or political conflict. While a resident's home or local social club may appear to be intimate or relatively innocuous locations, political conflict may nevertheless emerge. Since designers as outsiders have no way to predict these conflicts, it is advisable to propose a variety of potential meeting locations to numerous steering committee members prior to choosing a location. This will allow the designer to take stock of neighborhood knowledge prior to making a decision, and choose a location which appeals to all interested residents.

Event Facilitation

One of the many goals of developing a local steering committee was to encourage residents to assist in facilitating larger community meetings. Team Cudahy had positive experiences asking committee members to assist in the facilitation of meetings. In larger community meetings, committee members introduced the project, discussed its goals, and translated between English and Spanish. This helped to communicate that the project was not just for the student team,

While students felt that holding steering committee meetings in a committee member's garage created an accessible, intimate atmosphere, to some members it produced a barrier due to political disagreements with the homeowners.

but something being carried out by members of the community. Team Bell, however received limited support in this capacity. While residents occasionally offered to fulfill some of the tasks of a committee member, discussions regarding a sustained leadership role were met with disinterest.

Teams Bell and South Gate both experienced challenges related to dominant personalities taking over meetings, and felt that it was important to balance these members' opinions with those members who were less vocal. In Bell, this was accomplished by asking reluctant members their opinions directly. By contrast, Team South Gate found that the dominating presences were also those who were generally the most negative. The team made an effort to make these individuals feel heard before redirecting the conversation back to potential solutions.

In Cudahy, one committee member, far from being reluctant to speak, made frequent proclamations of his trust in the student team members as experts, and reassured the team that whatever decisions they made would be fine. These statements occurred on multiple occasions during meetings intended to discuss site design and details. It is unclear to what extent this sentiment was the result of the participant being unaccustomed to being asked his opinion in local projects, a high degree of trust for the design team, a lack of confidence in residents to make good decisions, or just a general disinterest in design. Regardless of the reason, the students took these incidents as opportunities to remind the committee members of their desire to design together with the community in order to ensure that the design reflected the community's character and met their needs.

The teams agreed that keeping meeting times short was advisable, as long meetings led to participants leaving prior to the meeting's completion. It was generally thought that meetings over an hour and a half should be avoided, particularly so when working with seniors, as reflected in the case of Thunderbird Villa. All teams agreed that keeping meetings and workshops to a regular time, day of the week, and location helped to promote regular attendance. Team Bell found that when the meeting times changed or became sporadic, attendance declined, and additional flyer notifications and phone calls became necessary.

Committee members introduced the project at community meetings which demonstrated community buy-in and leadership.

The Role of Inventory

The role of the inventory process is somewhat less clear in participatory design than in standard practice. In expert-led design, inventory is performed out of a recognition that the decision makers may not possess the information necessary to make an informed judgment. In this project, however, the experts on the local issues and decision makers were one and the same—the community members themselves. Students chose which issues to map based on the issues raised by the community. This led to questions regarding the purpose of inventory gathering. What might be the need, for example, for designers to ask community members where they feel unsafe if those same community members will determine the project location? If the community members possess a grasp of this information prior to site selection, what then was the purpose of mapping the issue?

One reason to carry out inventory exercises in a participatory design project may be scale. When working on a larger scale (for example a city scale), this type of analysis may be necessary to inform residents of the experiences of residents in other parts of the city. As this project occurred on a neighborhood scale, however, this was less necessary, as residents learned little from the experience. Neither Team Bell nor Team South Gate presented their inventory maps to the community, as they were sure that community members were well aware of the results. Team Cudahy displayed their inventory maps to their committee members prior to site selection, but this exercise was an opportunity for committee members to explain the inventory results to students, rather than vice versa.

In general, the students agreed that while this type of inventory is beneficial in participatory design, its role relates less to informing decisions (since decisions are being carried out by members of the community) and more to providing context to designers, bureaucrats, and politicians. Understanding residents' perceptions of their communities helps designers to appreciate why community members made certain decisions. This can lead to a clearer understanding of participatory design and how people relate to space—potentially influencing the discipline in the long term. There may also be value in the process of performing inventory exercises, as it helps residents to build consensus by allowing them to see where there is general agreement. Realizations and discussions that occur during this process may lead to decisions regarding inventory, as participants see that some of their views are shared with other members of the community, while others are not. Participatory inventory exercises should be followed by discussions of the results, focusing on where results were the same, where results differed, and the underlying issues behind these results.

Benefits of Participatory Inventory

A participatory inventory approach has some clear advantages over a more technocratic approach to inventory information gathering. The first is the method's ability to gather data related to residents' perceptions and experiences. Team Bell noted that the results of their participatory mapping and earlier GIS mapping provided very different outcomes. This was particularly notable with traffic data, as residents of Walker Avenue complained frequently of speeding traffic on their street, despite the low frequency of collisions apparent in the GIS data (see maps on the facing page). A second advantage of participatory inventory is the ability to understand information that is likely to go unreported. While reported incidents of crime along the river channel were relatively low, residents considered this area to be highly dangerous; a perception that was supported by lived experiences.

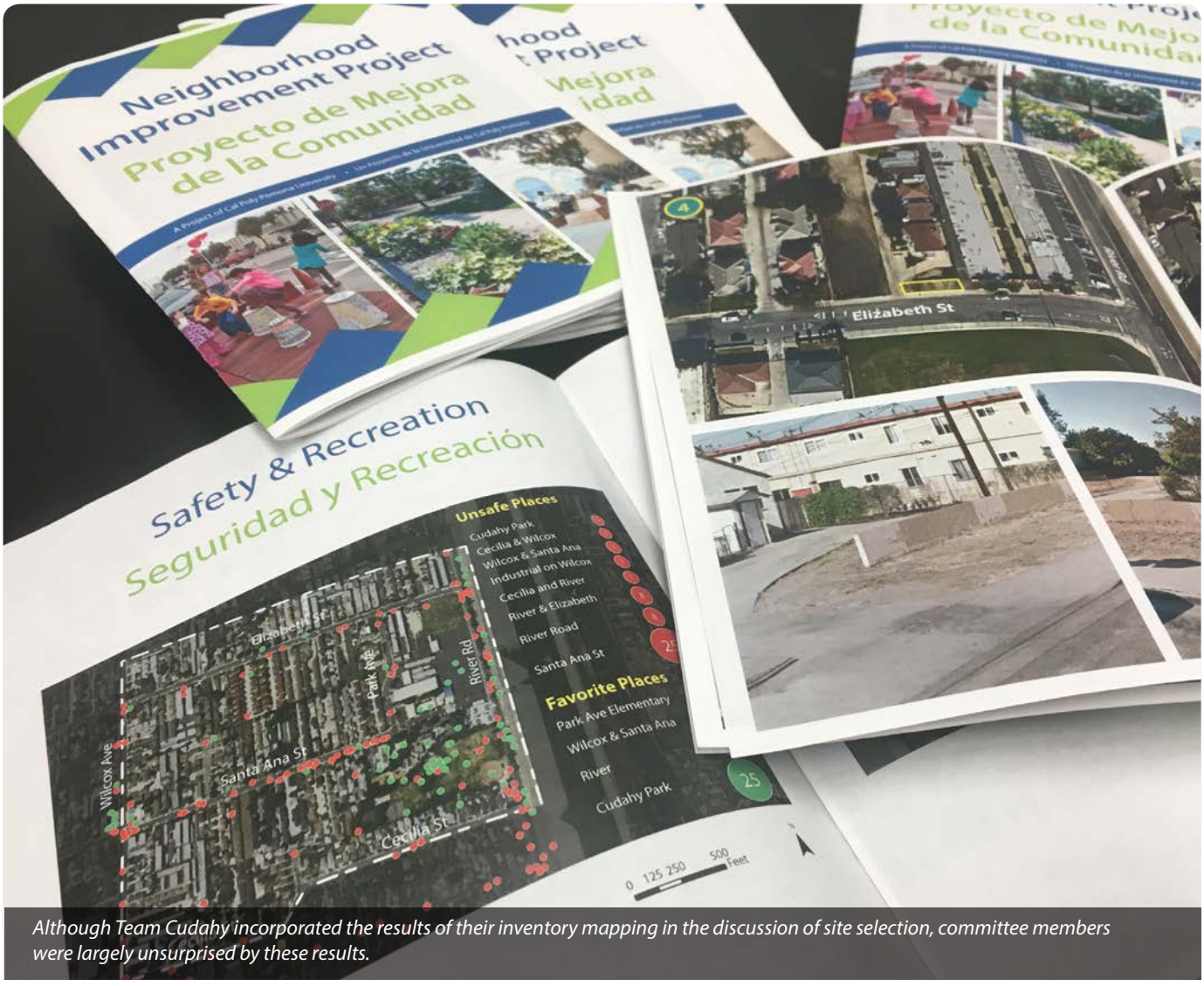
Facilitation of Inventory Methods

One of the primary lessons to emerge regarding inventory methods was the need to provide multiple mediums for feedback. This allows participants to contribute knowledge in the way in which they feel most comfortable. In addition to providing stickers and pens to mark maps, for example, Team Bell also moved through the audience during mapping exercises, taking notes for participants who preferred to share their thoughts verbally, a trend that was common for all three teams. Students also speculated that asking participants to mark information on paper might be reminiscent of schoolwork and residents may prefer less formal interactions in their leisure time.

Perceived unsafe places (above) and traffic collisions (below) in Bell del Rio. While GIS data suggested that traffic is not a major safety concern within the neighborhood, participatory mapping and discussions with residents revealed that this is a serious fear for local residents, particularly so at the intersection of Walker Avenue and Randolph Street.

Teams agreed that it was important not only to ask participants inventory questions—for example, what places they feel unsafe—but also to gain an understanding of why they marked these locations. Team Bell addressed this issue by moving through the audience during activities, taking notes, and found this method to be highly successful. Team Cudahy attempted the same approach, but were unable to do so effectively due to the large participant-to-student ratio. Instead, they had to rely on showing the inventory results to committee members the following week and asking for explanations of mapping trends. This approach had limitations because members were not always able to explain others' results. Thus, while Team Cudahy was able to effectively map the neighborhood's favorite locations, they possessed an incomplete knowledge of why some of these locations were marked.

Teams generally agreed that it was important to keep mapping exercises simple. Utilizing a variety of geometric symbols, for example, proved to be ineffective, as residents found them to be confusing. Asking members to locate their homes on the map was a good introduction to mapping exercises, as it oriented people who may have previously been unaccustomed to seeing maps of their own neighborhoods. While aerial images were effective at conveying a great deal of detail, their dark colors made it difficult for community members to make notes, and a base map with lighter colors may have been preferable.



Although Team Cudahy incorporated the results of their inventory mapping in the discussion of site selection, committee members were largely unsurprised by these results.

WORKING WITH POLITICIANS & CITY STAFF

Approval

In general, teams found working with city staff to be a complicated and challenging experience. In many ways a team's ability to begin construction in a timely manner and meet the community's design intent was determined largely by whether the site was located on public or private land, and the level of city review required. As cities are inherently risk averse and city staff may be reluctant to approve projects which appear outside the norm, this is not surprising. Participatory designers interested in working on public land must be aware of these challenges, and plan on involving city staff far in advance of the intended construction kickoff.

The fact that Team Bell was proposing a project on public land meant a lengthy approval process. City staff were originally encouraging with regards to the team's plans to move forward with a parklet, but later became unwilling to approve anything other than a street mural—thus undermining the community. When the pavement near the team's earliest street murals was tagged with a small amount of graffiti the week following its painting, city staff attempted to prevent the remaining murals from being painted. Overcoming this obstacle required community members actively advocating for the project and physically going to city hall to complain to city staff—ultimately causing the staff to relent and allow the project to move forward.

In Cudahy, where the project site was located on private property in a space adjacent to a mini market and butcher shop, obtaining approval took less than a week. A student team member met with the store owner's son to propose the project. The store owners agreed to the project and proposed the idea to the property owner, who also approved.

Despite the relative simplicity of gaining approval from the actual private property site holders, obstacles from the city nevertheless emerged. Because the property was in violation of a city ordinance requiring six percent of the parking lot to be dedicated to landscaping, the city had refused the store a business license, and it was operating under a conditional-use permit (CUP). The store owners' support for the project was contingent on satisfying the city's requirement. Although the team was able to build the community's desired project on the side of the property, these complications launched the team into a lengthy process of plan check on all elements, negotiations with the city related to what could be included in the six percent calculation, and the design and installation of planters and infiltration trenches in front of the store which had no relation to the community's needs or vision.

One of the project's steering committee members also served on the city's planning commission and was invaluable in both guiding the team through this process and pressuring the city staff to move the project forward. This led to the conclusion that participatory design projects should attempt to involve residents who are involved in local government, but are also heavily invested in the project and its goals.

Communication

Opinions regarding the best timing to meet with city staff differed among teams. Team South Gate had success meeting with staff early in the process to broadly introduce the project, but doing so without explicitly stating their intention to build. These meetings were framed as efforts to learn from city staff, and were largely intended to avoid insulting these staff members by excluding them from the process. Discussions of construction were left until team members were forced to engage in a mandatory plan check prior to construction. Team Bell's experience may also provide support for using this method. The team was the only one to be forthright about their intention to build in early meetings with the city, and their response was largely pessimistic about the project's potential. The team faced frequent objections from the city throughout the project.

However, the tension between city staff and Team Cudahy may have been due in part to the opaqueness with which students discussed the project goals during the early phases of the project. As with Team South Gate, students met with city staff early in the project but avoided discussing plans for construction. This, however, led to an awkward encounter in which students were deliberately evasive regarding project

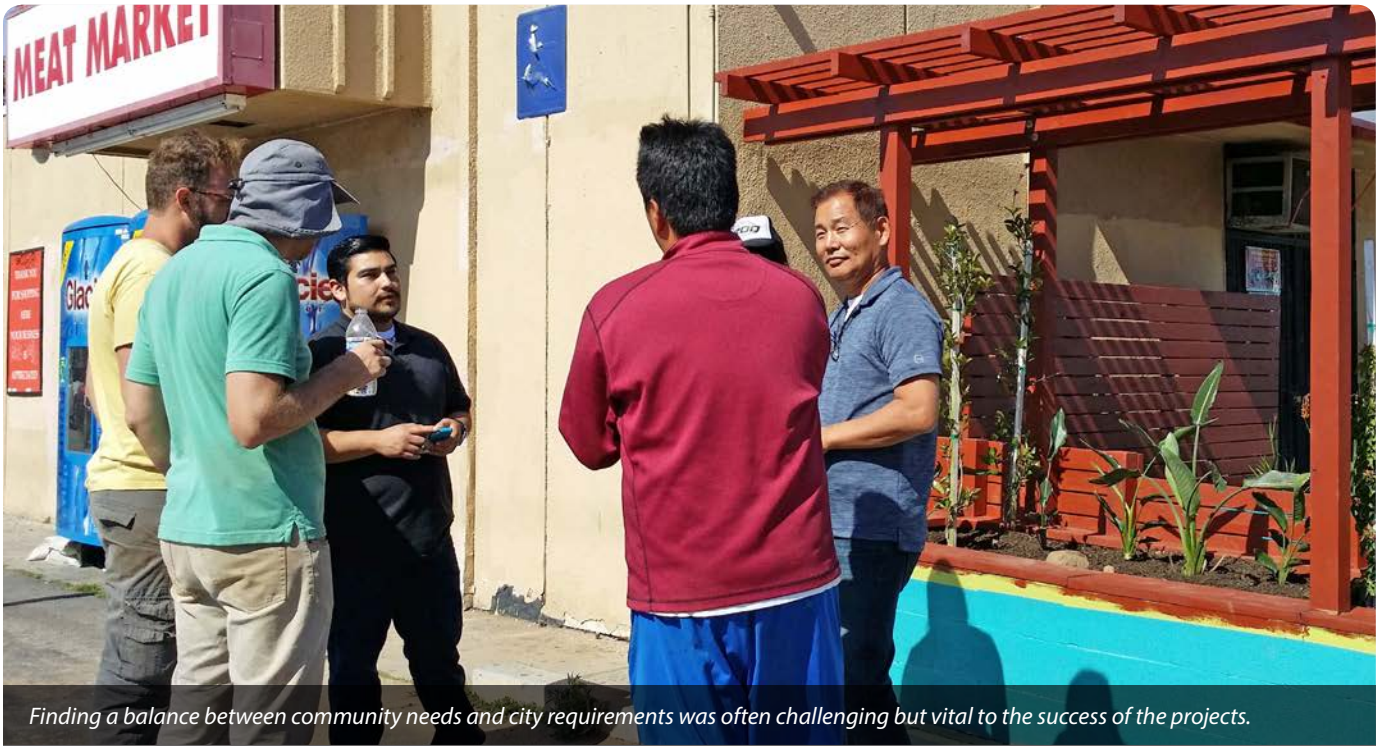
goals, possibly frustrating city staff from the early stages of the project.

Team Bell met with several city staff early in the project but stopped due to negative experiences with a city council member. Later in the process however, when the team was struggling to get approval for their project, a sympathetic city staff member guided the team through the process, helping them to avoid city council approval. The team felt that finding a sympathetic city staff member earlier in the project would have aided them in this process.

With regards to elected officials, teams generally received stated support for their projects, although this did not translate into substantive support later in the process. In Cudahy, city council members, the mayor, and members of the planning commission were all outwardly supportive, with three of the five elected officials actually coming to work days and providing food. However, these elected officials were unwilling to support the students in their negotiations with city staff. In Bell, the project was met with initial excitement from one city council member, although he failed to return the team's emails later in the process. As with Cudahy, it was the community members rather than the elected officials who advocated for the project when obstacles arose.

Although Team South Gate did not need to gain city approval for their built project, the team nevertheless experienced difficulties in communicating with city staff, both in gaining necessary information and seeking approval for earlier versions of the project. A challenge experienced by the team was getting the city on the same time frame as the project. While the team needed their inquiries answered quickly and requests approved, the city moved at a much slower pace, and resisted moving faster to meet the team's needs. As a response, the team began visiting city hall in person rather than reaching out by email or phone. Arriving before city hall opened, and waiting until a city official could meet with the team was very successful in fast-tracking communication, and ultimately getting official answers from the city. Though the efforts to work with the city and use public space were ultimately not fruitful, finally getting an official 'no' from the city of South Gate was an important step in moving forward and focusing attentions on the North Rec. Hall site.

Participatory designers must weigh the potential benefits of approaching municipalities early in the process and potentially finding a valuable ally, against the threat of disapproval from city staff. This threat would be particularly damaging early in the project, when there is insufficient community buy-in to overcome these challenges. When public support for the project has grown, it is more difficult for projects to be halted.



Finding a balance between community needs and city requirements was often challenging but vital to the success of the projects.

DESIGN LESSONS

Design Generation and Feedback

Teams found it was beneficial to provide multiple mediums for participants to contribute to design generation and feedback. In many instances the types of feedback preferred by participants varied according to age.

In the 55-plus community of Thunderbird Villa, Team South Gate noted that residents preferred to talk through a design before placing any pieces, and that some participants would leave the exercise table to tell the students their design ideas rather than incorporating them into the plan. The team also noted that movable elements were popular, and that participants seemed to find these pieces less intimidating than drawing. When residents did draw, they asked specifically for pencils, as they were nervous about making mistakes and considered the pens to be too permanent, reserving them for later in the process when their design ideas were more final. Team Cudahy noted that while older residents were more comfortable communicating their design ideas through speech or ready-made pieces, children preferred drawing or the abstract tangram pieces utilized by the group.

Team Bell noted that while participants who had been continuously attending events seemed comfortable contributing design ideas, new participants were not. This may have been in part due to the fact that many of these new participants were Spanish speakers, and time constraints precluded a full translation. The team reflected that it would have been preferable to do less design work in the session and clearly explain the project and the meeting's goals in Spanish and English.

Teams differed with regards to whether or not special effort must be taken to involve children. For Team Cudahy, many children boldly stepped into the design process with little self-consciousness, while some adults languished. In Bell however, child participants generally operated as extensions of their parents, and contributed little to the design.

Older participants frequently preferred lengthy discussions prior to beginning to design.

Design Education

While all teams attempted to perform design education prior to workshops, this was met with mixed results. For Team South Gate, participants found the design education to be interesting, and actively incorporated the principles taught, in particular those related to social seating. In Cudahy, while some participants focused solely on obeying the design principles set out by the team, others did not incorporate them at all. In Bell, the nuances and challenges posed by the site made this process a challenge. The high degree of technical difficulties involved due to the slope and existing levee wall (for example, the potential need for a retaining wall) led to confusion among participants.

Design Synthesis

Design refinement proved challenging for each of the three teams. As meeting participants were asked to generate multiple design ideas for each site, and this created the need to develop tools to synthesize the various designs.

In Cudahy, team members developed a series of questions regarding the differences between

the designs, for example, “This group defined their edge with a planter. This group used a tree. What do you think?” These questions were posed to committee members who answered them working as a group, marking new locations using post-it notes on a base map. While this method did lead to an effective, cohesive design, it bears little resemblance to any of the three alternatives developed during the community design workshop, creating worries that participants at these workshops might feel that their contribution had been disregarded. Synthesizing the three designs in another larger community workshop (as opposed to a committee meeting) would have involved more participants and possibly led to greater community buy-in.

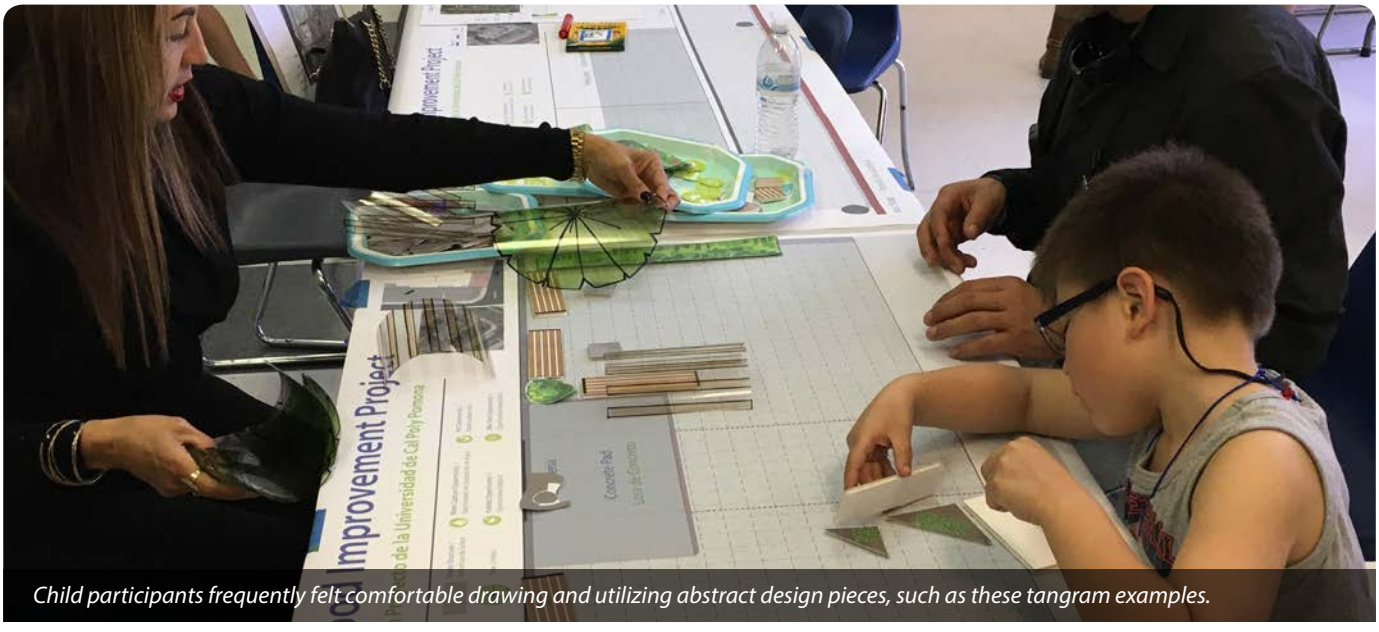
Team South Gate found success working with committee members to define what elements of each of the designs were similar or different. By comparing and contrasting the designs the steering committee and team were able to develop an intermediate level design that contained all of the similar elements. With this intermediate design, the community was able to then decide how to reconcile their major differences, and ultimately craft a finalized design. This same method was used to work out the details of the design, with community members articulating their preferences from a wide range of design styles, which was then narrowed for final decision making.

Team Bell took a different approach in which team members themselves developed three design alternatives by combining and refining the three designs developed during the community design workshop. These three alternatives were then taken back to the community, who marked elements they liked and did not like and made suggestions regarding new potential locations and details as the meeting progressed.

Design Graphics

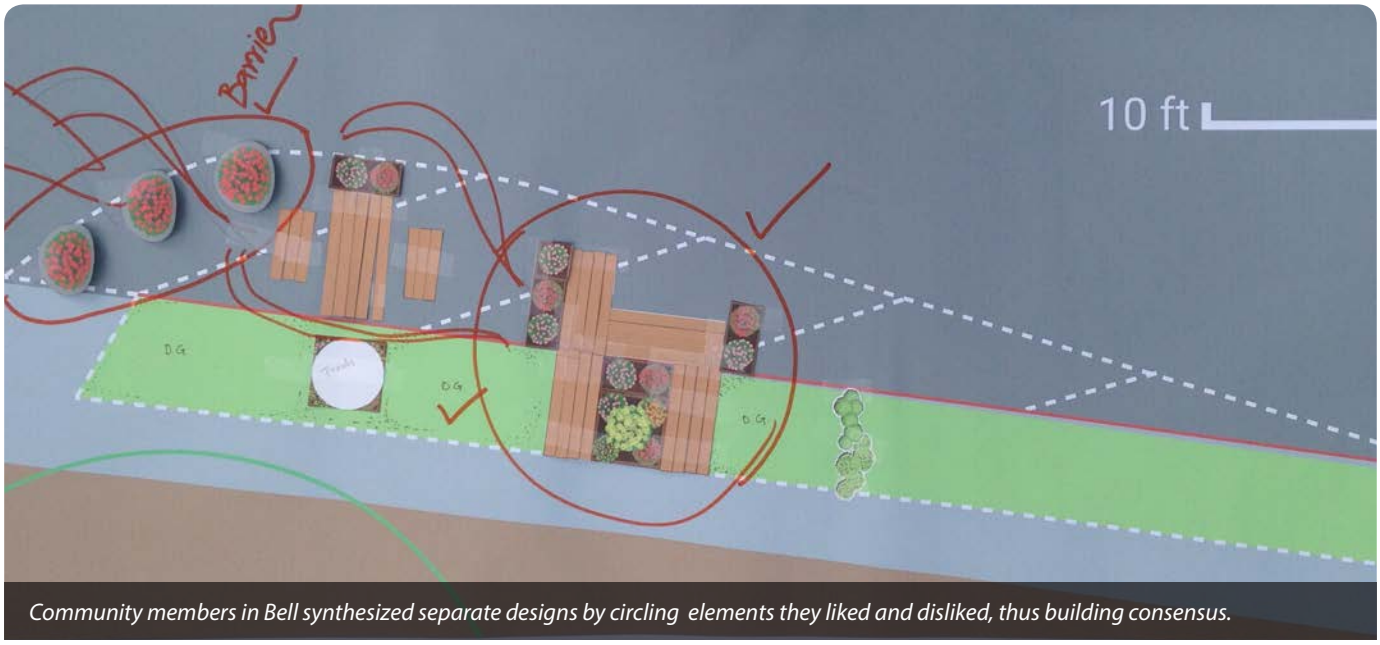
Teams agreed that the creation and presentation of high quality graphics was very effective in increasing excitement and understanding among members of the community. In South Gate, even long-time project participants commented that seeing polished plans and perspectives made them truly believe in the potential of the project. The team concluded that the quality of the graphics can significantly impact the level of support and commitment to the project. Team Cudahy used 3D-modeling software to create graphics following the design phase, and found that these graphics were effective in both recruiting participants for construction (a laminated perspective was left at the site with a “Volunteers Wanted” sign) and impressing city staff during plan check.

In some ways this finding contradicts the standard thinking regarding graphics in participatory design, which indicates that less polished graphics are preferred, as they seem less complete and thus invite the participants to critique. Team Bell followed this approach, creating only rough CAD drawings. However, this approach led to neither a high degree of design feedback nor the increase in enthusiasm that other teams received.



Child participants frequently felt comfortable drawing and utilizing abstract design pieces, such as these tangram examples.

Steering committee members in Cudahy synthesized various community designs using sticky notes.



Community members in Bell synthesized separate designs by circling elements they liked and disliked, thus building consensus.

Ensuring Participation

One of the major lessons to emerge from the construction phase of the three projects was the importance of ensuring all participants are continuously engaged in productive work. Community members participating in work days who felt they did not have work to do generally left and were unlikely to return. The primary challenge faced by teams during the construction process was keeping participants busy and engaged. All teams agreed that doing some pre-work day preparation was necessary.

In Bell, the team decided that their mural painting went more smoothly if they did the outline work prior to asking community members to arrive, thus avoiding a bottleneck in which a few people worked while the rest waited. For the same reason, the team also mixed paint the day prior to involving the community. To address similar issues, Team Cudahy frequently prepared tasks for community members ahead of time. By cutting wood the night before a work day, for example, the team ensured that the wood was ready to be sanded and painted at the start of the workday, thus ensuring tasks for any residents who arrived early in the day. The team also frequently attempted to handle challenging technical difficulties related to construction prior to the work day. While this had the advantage of producing work days that flowed more smoothly and hit fewer bottlenecks, it excluded the majority of residents from this preparatory work.

Team South Gate was able to implement a solution to the problem of consistent engagement, although it required a relatively high degree of organization. By inviting residents to participate at different times throughout the day, the team was able to guarantee that there was enough work for all participants. This method also ensured that there were always students and community members working together but that the number of people working at one time was easily managed by the student team.

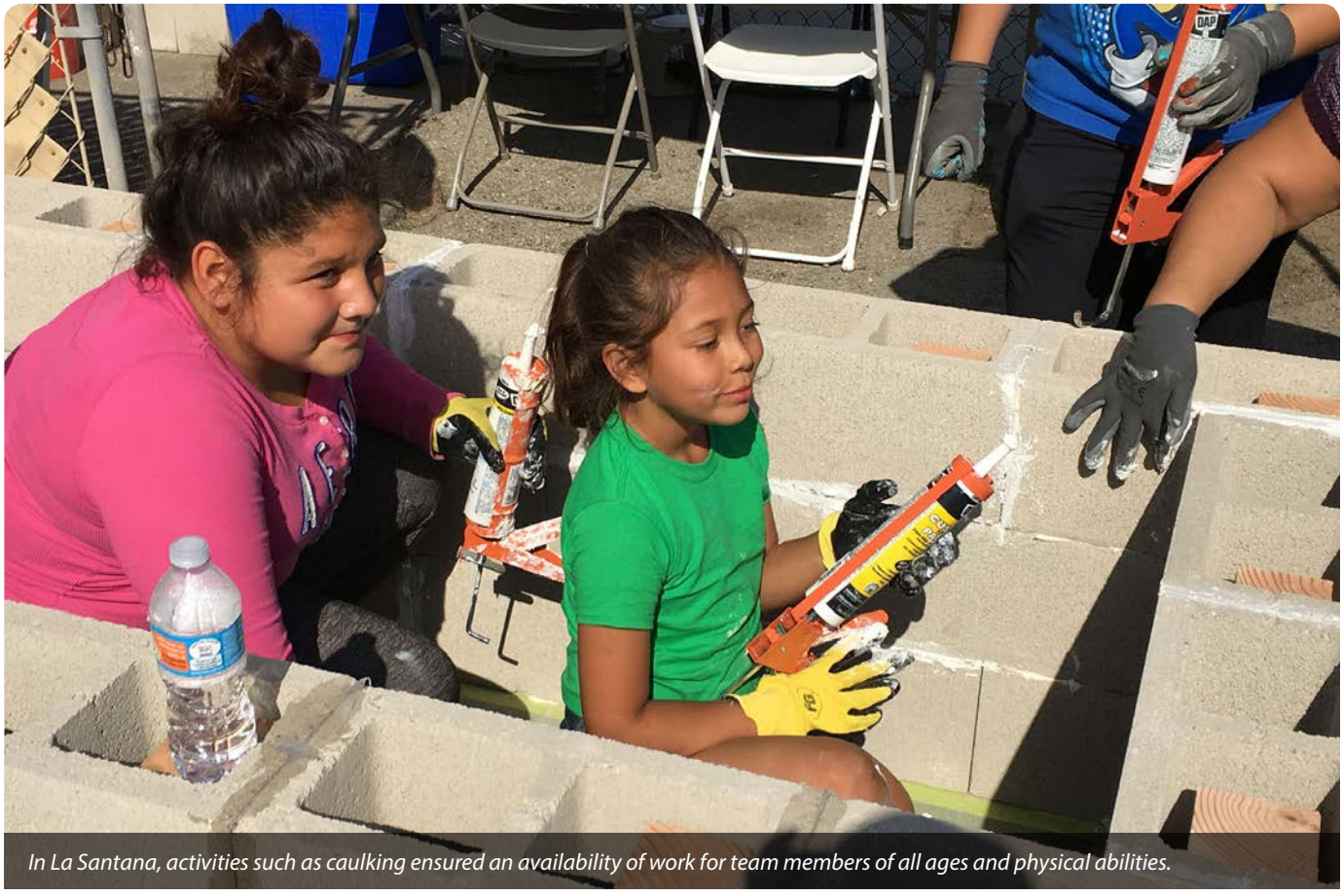
Team Cudahy reflected that employing this technique would have been beneficial but difficult to implement, due in part to the highly sporadic nature of participants making spur-of-the-moment decisions to participate while passing on the street, attracted in large part by enthusiastic and charismatic committee members. Nevertheless, posting a construction sign-up sheet with time slots (in addition to the “Volunteers Needed” sign that was posted)

Pre-planning was necessary to avoid situations in which there was insufficient work for all participants.

may have organized the process. Team Cudahy also felt that most of the planning leading up to build days was overly focused on the logistics of moving materials and understanding the difficult technical elements of construction, and that they likely should have devoted time to planning tasks throughout the day to ensure an availability of work at all hours and for all community participants.

All teams agreed that having a high diversity of tasks for community members is helpful to ensure that residents stay busy, and that work moves forward efficiently. Team Bell tackled this issue by dividing participants into groups in which each group painted a different intersection. For Team Cudahy, it was not uncommon for participants to be mixing and pouring concrete, cutting wood, drilling holes, and gluing concrete blocks, all simultaneously. At the busiest times in construction this took little coordination, as residents naturally organized each other, pulling people into short-handed tasks and moving on to new tasks when complete. At other times however (for example, when the paint had yet to dry, and the concrete had not set), many participants left.
In addition to providing a multitude of tasks, it is also important that there are constantly tasks which allow everyone to participate regardless of skill, age and physical ability. Team South Gate's project required staining large amounts of lumber, an activity that could be carried out by all members of the 55-plus community. Team Cudahy likewise found that painting and caulking were excellent activities for including child participants and residents unable to participate in heavy construction. Other residents who were unable to help build provided food for the workers. This led to a fun, block party-like atmosphere, and helped to keep morale high. This also ensured that residents did not have to leave the project site to eat, which as Team Bell found, leads to many participants not returning.

In some instances, engaging residents in a variety of tasks simultaneously required teaching residents a new skill. Team South Gate found it highly beneficial to ask participants which tasks they were interested in performing. In this way, the team was not only able to ensure efficiency, but also allow participants to engage on their own terms, thus increasing empowerment and ensuring buy-in.



In La Santana, activities such as caulking ensured an availability of work for team members of all ages and physical abilities.

In Thunderbird Villa, staining wood was a task that was accessible to all members of the community.

Construction Phasing

Teams Cudahy and South Gate agreed that planning the build days to allow the creation of individual site elements in a single day was beneficial. Building distinct site elements over the course of a day or weekend allowed the teams to focus on smaller units of work, required less space to store materials, and simplified material purchasing and transportation. Aside from these logistical reasons, the teams agreed that it was satisfying for both participants and team members to have an element complete at the end of a work day (as opposed to several partially completed elements). For Team Cudahy, this approach also aided in the team's effort to maintain a positive relationship with city staff and create minimal problems for the site's owners. As the team feared that leaving the space looking like a construction site throughout the week (when city staff routinely drive by on their way to city hall) would draw negative attention, this approach helped to avoid such a situation. This approach necessitates more trips for materials and additional coordination for their transport.

Construction as a Recruitment Tool

All teams agreed that new community members joined the project as construction progressed, and that construction had a positive effect on participation. Team South Gate experienced steadily growing participation throughout the build phase. This may be because the high-profile nature of construction led to community members learning of the project for the first time. It may also be that construction attracts a different group of people than meetings.

In Team Bell's experience, due to the previously discussed delays in obtaining city approval, the team was forced to perform a great deal of the work for their long term project before painting their murals. During these meetings participants generally seemed confused, and the meetings were poorly attended. In comparison, Team South Gate held meetings related to their long term project after completing a number of successful work days. As previously noted, community participation grew steadily throughout the build phase, and because of this momentum, the team's long-term project meeting was their most highly attended.

Given these results, the teams concluded that introducing some construction earlier in the project would be beneficial as it leads to greater interest, participation, and faith in the project outcomes. Far fewer people would be able to participate in the design due to the shorter time frame, and the scope of these early construction projects would be greatly reduced. For this reason, it is advisable to perform only very small scale construction early in the project. As the project gains local buy-in and participation grows, so too can the size and complexity of construction.

CONCLUSION

8.7

The goal of this project was to test the efficacy of participatory design-build in disadvantaged, river adjacent communities. The results speak for themselves. Over the course of nine months, through participatory design, the 606 team was able to build a small urban plaza in the empty space next to a butcher shop, create a community gathering space in a trailer park, and paint four street murals. Community members were deeply engaged throughout the process—recruiting new members, creating designs, selecting sites, swinging hammers, and advocating on behalf of the projects when faced with challenges. Taken as a whole, the success of these projects leaves little doubt as to the readiness of these communities to engage in participatory design.

The larger question is whether the professional community of landscape architecture is ready to truly engage these communities and integrate participatory design into standard practice. Participatory design offers the profession a way to engage in social justice work, creates a bridge to empowerment for underserved communities, and helps build social capital in communities of color. This approach necessitates ceding ego-based design in favor of meeting community needs and actualizing neighborhood vision. Although the 606 students now see participation as essential, many confessed to seeing public participation as an unnecessary burden prior to this project, a view no doubt shared by many in the profession. The longer timeline and specific expertise required for these projects are barriers for many professionals.

Currently, there is interest in master planning the Los Angeles River, likely due to its potential to create continuity and foster regional connections. Far from being mutually exclusive, master planning and participatory design could and should complement each other. By integrating participatory design methods into larger scale approaches, master planning could benefit from the insights that emerge from sustained contact with communities. Participatory approaches highlight local landscape opportunities, and the nuances that surround them, as is evidenced by this project.

As the resources required for participatory design-build projects are relatively small in comparison to those utilized in master planning, it would be feasible to incorporate these participatory design-build projects in the early stages of master planning. This would allow master planning to incorporate the types of local knowledge and insights that arise from involving the community. Additionally, as demonstrated through this project, participatory design-build creates community buy-in and develops good faith between residents and designers, as residents see their needs being addressed in a deliberate, immediate way. This would likely lead to more robust participation later in the regional master planning process.

Until the practice of participatory design-build becomes more common, it will continue to be seen by many as unconventional and threatening. This may have been part of the reason that teams faced frequent challenges from city staff. This struggle is most apparent in the ways in which the property site holder influenced the project outcomes. For Team Bell, the only team to attempt a project on public land, the scope of their project was reduced from a parklet to a street mural due to city apprehension. Team Bell's timeline for construction was also significantly delayed while awaiting city approval. When we consider that cities are inherently risk averse, as well as the high degree of scrutiny which exists in both Bell and Cudahy due to past scandals, these employees were understandably apprehensive of approving projects that deviate from the norm. Landscape architects interested in participatory design-build projects on public land must take this into account and plan accordingly. They may need to engage city governments earlier in the process, anticipate longer pathways to approval, and prepare for reduced scopes of work in the short term.

When difficulties with cities arose, the benefits of community buy-in became most apparent. During these challenges, it was the physical presence of community members in city hall which moved stalled and jeopardized projects forward. Involving steering committee members with knowledge of local government is essential, as these participants can combine their passion for the project with an intimate knowledge of how conflicts within the city are resolved.

When examining the results of the participatory design method—one in which community members see the potential in unlikely places, advocate for projects, and carry them through to completion—this project provides a powerful argument for approaching future river work within a participatory framework.

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Photo 1: Cudahy's long parcels, once used for agriculture, are now filled with dense residential housing: ESRI. (2015).

All other photographs by the 606 Studio team.

See DVD insert at the end of the document for Appendices B–E

APPENDICES

ABOUT THE 606 STUDIO

The California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 606 Studio is a design team made up of faculty and third-year Landscape Architecture Masters candidates. Projects promote the application of advanced methods of analysis and design to address serious and important ecological, social, and aesthetic issues related to urban, suburban, rural, and natural landscapes.

The professionally academic environment creates unique opportunities for graduate students to explore issues and possibilities at a variety of levels. With faculty direction and participation, students carry out the project. Projects address significant issues concerning resources (may be natural, social, cultural, historical, or some combination of) and the physical environment, with broad implications beyond the project boundaries (e.g. site-specific, local, and regional associations and interactions), which result in significant benefits to the general public.

For more information on the 606 Studio, please contact the Department of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona.

ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Dr. Lee-Anne Milburn

FASLA, Professor of Landscape Architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Dr. Milburn researches issues related to sustainability, water quality and quantity, energy consumption and the energy-water nexus, active and alternate transportation, human capacity through outdoor physical activity, land conservation and stewardship, and physical design's impact on the urban heat island (and related problems). Her other primary area of research is specific to landscape architecture: the research culture of landscape architecture, relationship between research and design, and distributing and communicating research to the design professions. Her teaching interests are directly related to her scholarly concerns: sustainable design, healthy communities, and site-scale design to affect human activity. Dr. Milburn has a B.F.A., an M.L.A., and a Ph.D. in Rural Studies-Environmental Design and Rural Development.

Steve Rasmussen Cancian

Lecturer, Department of Landscape Architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Steve leads Shared Spaces, a community-based participatory design firm. His practice combines organizing, facilitation and design to enable people to participate in every step of creating places that resonate with their experience, desires, community and culture. At all scales, from the neighborhood bench to the community specific plan, he seeks to collaborate with communities to create improvements that serve current residents without catalyzing gentrification. He has published research on historic design-build methods and leads a youth design-build project. He conducts trainings on participatory methods and cultural and gender bias in design. Before studying landscape architecture, Steve was a community and political organizer for 13 years. He has a B.A. in American History from Columbia University and an M.L.A. from the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Weimin Li

ASLA, Graduate coordinator, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Dr. Li specialized in advanced geoprocessing modeling, high resolution remote sensing imagery processing and 3D landscape construction, and their application in a wide range of landscape design and planning practices. In addition to Geodesign, Dr. Li also researches the environmental and social impacts of contemporary landscape design and planning on different dimensions of sustainability and quality of life in urban settings, including storm water management, urban green space, wildlife habitat conservation, multimodal transportation neighborhood justice. Dr. Li's teaching echoes her research interests and includes introductory and advanced GIS, intermediate landscape design, environmental analysis and advanced ecosystematic landscape design. Dr. Li has a B.S. in Urban and Resource Planning, an M.S. in Physical Geography, and a Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning from University of California, Berkeley.

ABOUT THE 606 STUDIO TEAM

Charmy Adesara

Charmy Adesara studied Architecture in India and Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona. She has over six years of experience in the design and construction of residential architecture projects focusing on use of vernacular materials and construction techniques in creating culturally sensitive spaces. Her current interest lies in design of public open space for underserved minorities, importance of native plants in creating multi-benefit landscapes, and creating culturally sensitive public spaces.

Jie Dang

Jie Dang studied Information Management and Systems and Landscape Architecture in China and continued in the masters program of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona. Her interests in landscape architecture focus on park design, residential design, and the differences and similarities of concepts between traditional Chinese garden and Western landscape. She has a passion for California native plants and their importance in regional sustainable landscape and ecology. During graduate school, her interests focus on site design and environmental planning to achieve harmonious balance, active interaction and positive outcomes between human and nature.

Lianwei Ding

Lianwei Ding studied landscape architecture in China and came to Cal Poly Pomona for the M.L.A. program. Her focus lies in creating connections between people and nature through public open space. She has a passion for California native plants and their importance in regional sustainable landscape and ecology. She hopes to inspire a conscious environmental awareness and help people to gain a sense of understanding of the native flora and fauna throughout her career in landscape architecture.

TEAM BELL

ABOUT THE 606 STUDIO TEAM

Adam Kehoss

Adam Kehoss has a B.S. in Community and Regional Planning and worked in planning and civic work for five years working for community and economic development, recreational programming, and recreational services. Thus, his interest in Landscape Architecture co-exisits and supplements his work at the civic level. During his time as a graduate student, he has interned for the U.S. Forest Service collecting information about park and user behaviors and environmental factors impacting park use. Professionally, he hopes to work as a consultant working directly with people at the community or regional level.

Jeremy Munns

Jeremy Munns has a B.A. in Advertising and worked in educational publishing for 9 years, designing and editing history textbooks, classroom products, and graphics for educational software. His decision to shift careers was prompted by a growing passion for ecological design, watershed health, and the desire to take his talents beyond the printed page to create a lasting, positive impact on the physical world. During his time as a graduate student, he has interned for several government agencies, assisting with revitalization efforts along the Los Angeles and San Gabriel rivers, open space preservation, and urban greening. Professionally, he hopes to continue to work in the public sector, pursuing design solutions that deliver mutualistic benefits for both human and ecological communities.

Matthew Moffa

Matthew Moffa sees landscape architecture as a means to unite ecology, design, and infrastructure and believes that the future of the discipline lies in building landscapes that address social injustice, solve environmental problems, and inspire the urban populace. Matthew's interests in the field include urban rivers, stormwater management, constructed wetlands, and urban habitat creation. He holds strong skill sets in geographic information systems and remote sensing, which he gained during an internship at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Prior to pursuing his master's degree, Matthew spent two years serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Zambia, leading projects related to agroforestry, conservation farming, and HIV/AIDS education. Before the Peace Corps he spent five months living and volunteering with a rural development nonprofit in Guatemala. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He hopes to one day own his own firm.

Fei Xie

Fei Xie has a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Urban Planning and worked as an interior designer for 3 years. Her passions in Landscape Architecture integrate both large scale planning and small scale designing. During her time as an M.L.A. student, she focuses on Parametric Design. Envisioning her future career, she develops her practical skills as an intern in a landscape firm, in the meantime she keeps exploring Parametric Landscape Design.

TEAM CUDAHY

ABOUT THE 606 STUDIO TEAM

Cristhian Barajas

Having completed his Bachelor's degree in Architecture in Tijuana, Mexico in 2013, he pursued the landscape architecture graduate degree in Cal Poly Pomona. He started working in architectural design related projects since 2011 and has been involved in the landscape architecture practice since 2012. Cristhian Barajas has been awarded five times by local entities and over the course of his career has directly participated in two scientific publications and three design projects presentations in published papers. During and after his architecture studies, he worked as a 3D modeling and rendering instructor at the undergraduate level and also independently; having comprehensive skills about many software, visual representation, photorealism and graphic design. His focus is to blend architectural practices and landscape architecture in order to achieve more sustainable developments. Hoping in the future to expand his education and field of work in urban planning, he is strongly familiar with latino urbanism, bringing a unique point of view to this project.

Kasandra Mina Di Pieri

Kasandra Mina Di Pieri studied Urban Learning and Science Education at California State University, Los Angeles. She was a K-12 Science teacher for 11 years, and incorporated her passion for plants, landscape systems, and landscaping into her teaching. She has two Single Subject Credentials specializing in Geo-Science and Chemistry, with a Master's Degree in Science Education and a Permit Technician License. During graduate school, her interests focused on Landscape Design with Natural Processes and Ecological Land Management. She designed landscapes for public health, firescaping, stormwater management, greywater management and rainwater harvesting, carbon neutrality, ecological restoration, and gardens to attract wildlife.

Matt Wild

After working as a project manager and landscaper for a design/build landscaping firm in the Bay Area, Matt entered Cal Poly Pomona's Department of Landscape Architecture to pursue a Master's Degree. Formally educated at the University of California at Santa Barbara in Political Science and Spanish, Matt has approached the field of landscape architecture with an interest in bringing design principles towards building the physical, political, social, and cultural structures of our society. As an intern with the Department of Recreation and Parks of the City of Los Angeles, Matt began shaping his new city, working on designs for parks in San Pedro and mid-city. An avid cyclist and hiker, Matt is excited to join Alta Planning + Design after graduation to work on active transportation projects around Southern California.

Sara Yazdi

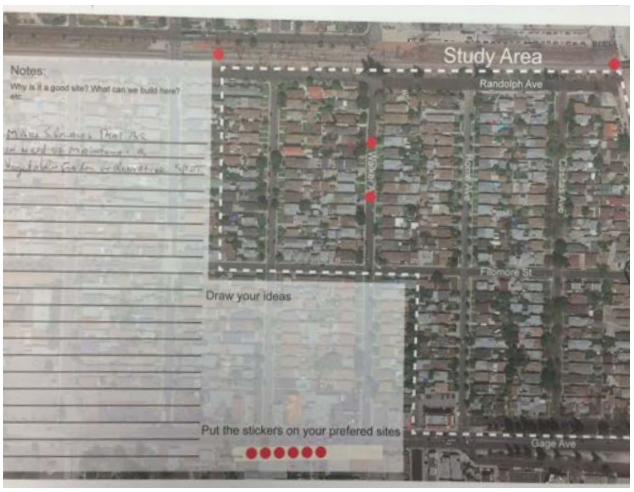
Sara Yazdi received her master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the Azad University of Tehran, Iran with honors. Upon receiving her Master's degree, she was offered teaching posts by three high-ranking universities in the city of Mashhad, which the second largest metropolitan area in Iran. She taught Urban Terminology, Rural Planning, Urban Space Analysis, and Geographical Studies at those universities. She also had five years of extensive fieldwork experience participating in various urban planning and design projects in the metropolitan urban settings. Her involvement in these projects was direct and hands on. This gave her a unique opportunity to work closely with various prominent consulting and engineering companies applying and utilizing her education and her experience.

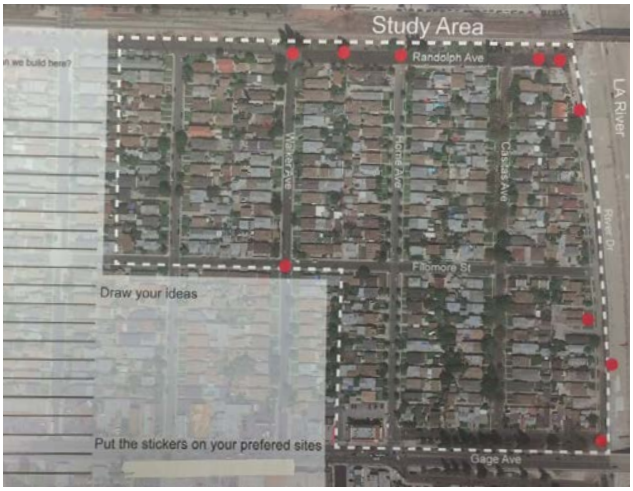
TEAM SOUTH GATE

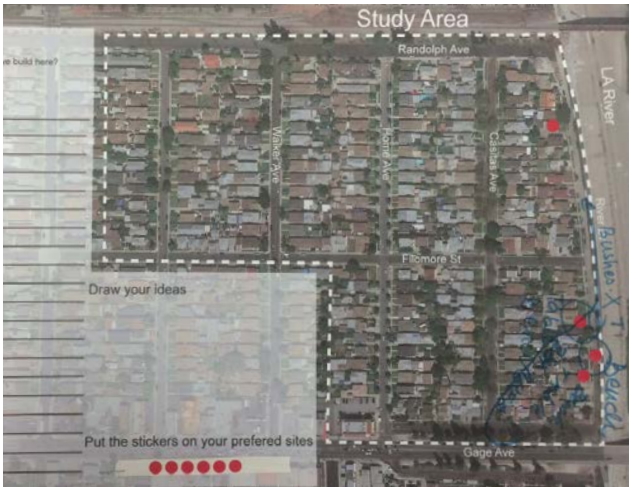
Appendix B.1 | Canvassing Bilingual Flyer

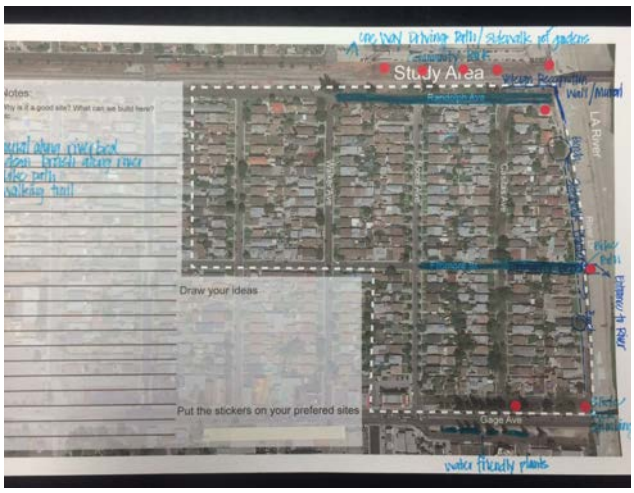
Appendix B.2 | Site Walk Bilingual Flyer

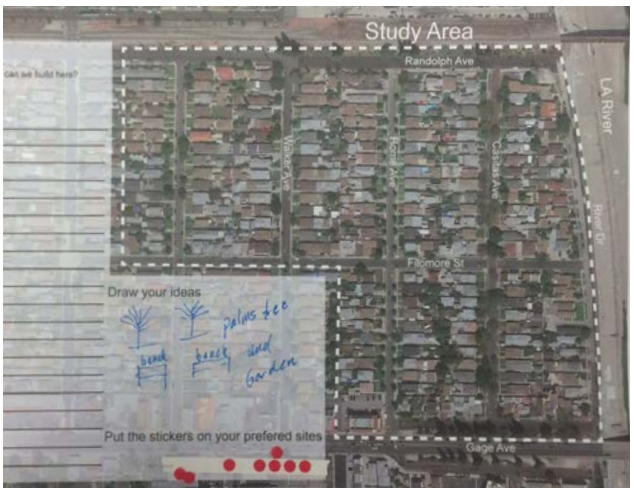
Study Area
Randolph Ave
LA River
Draw your ideas
Fillmore St
Put the stickers on your prefered sites
Gage Ave


Notes:
Study Area
Randolph Ave
Draw your ideas
Put the stickers on your prefered sites

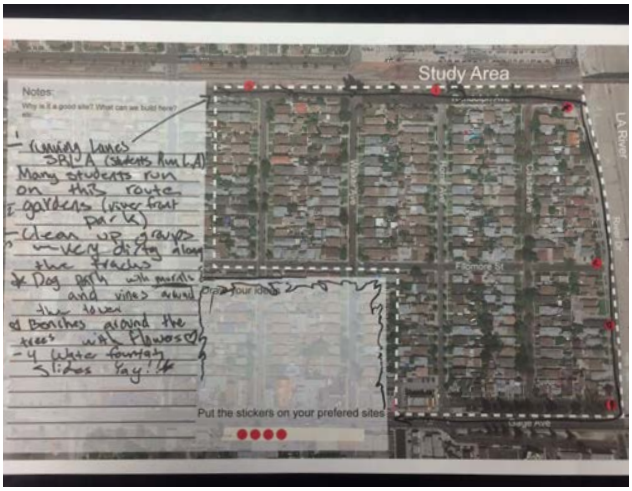

Study Area
Randolph Ave
LA River
Draw your ideas
Fillmore St
Put the stickers on your prefered sites
Gage Ave


Study Area
Randolph Ave
LA River
Draw your ideas
Fillmore St
Put the stickers on your prefered sites
Gage Ave


Study Area
Draw your ideas
Put the stickers on your prefered sites


Study Area
Randolph Ave
LA River
Draw your ideas
Fillmore St
Put the stickers on your prefered sites
Gage Ave

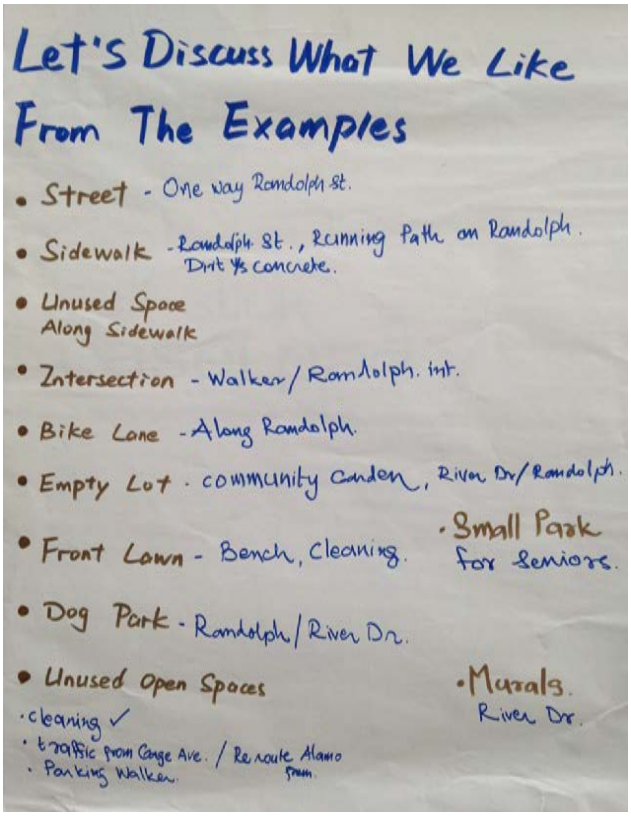
APPENDIX B

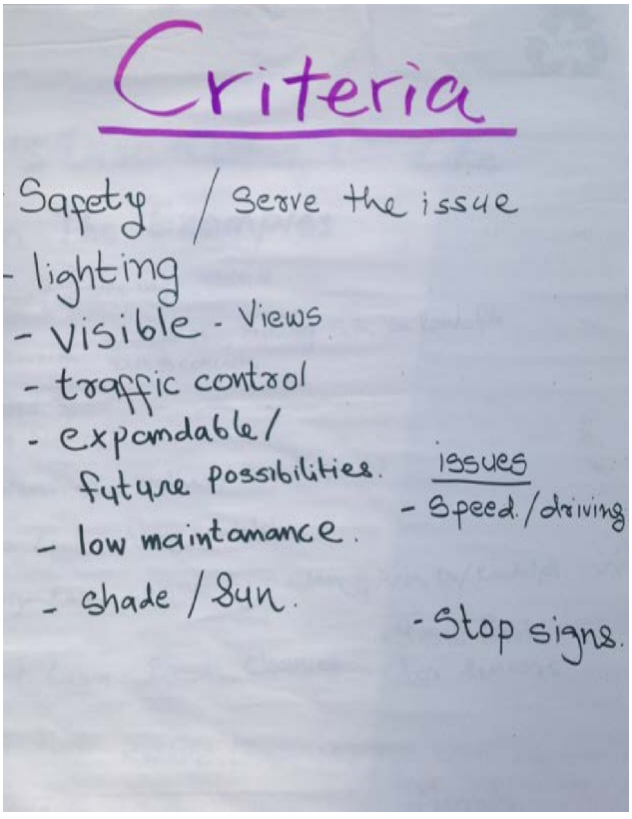


Appendix B.4 | Site Walk Brainstorm Session Notes

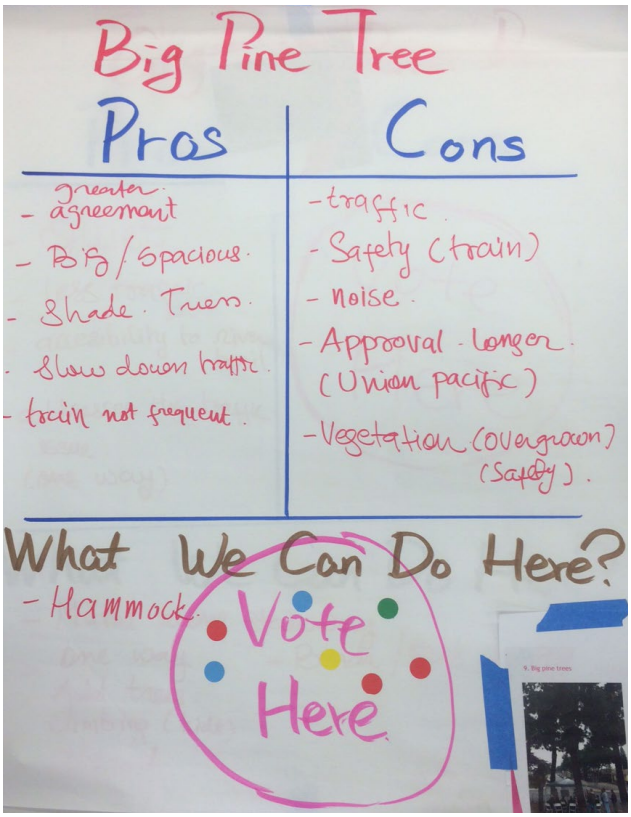
Appendix B.5 | Community Vote Meeting Bilingual Flyer

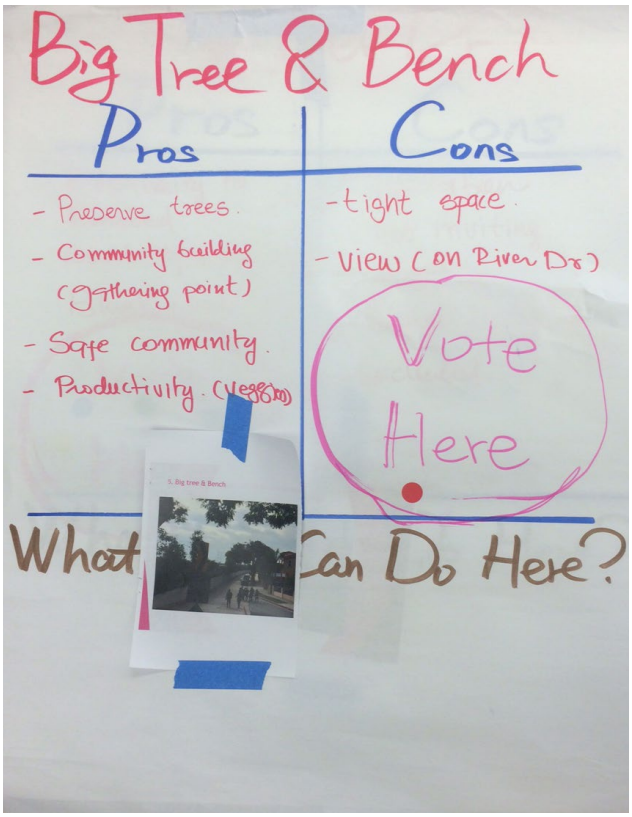
Appendix B.6 | Community Vote Meeting Brainstorm Session

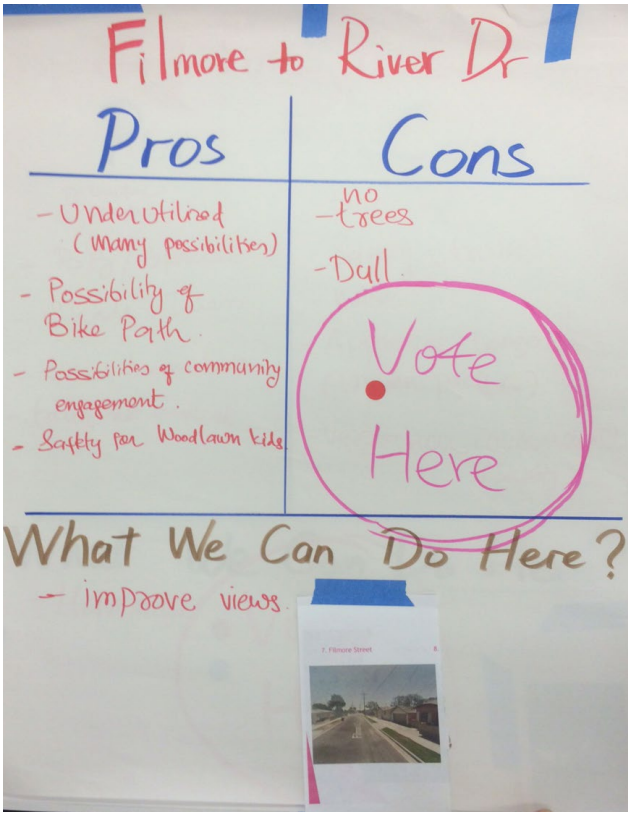


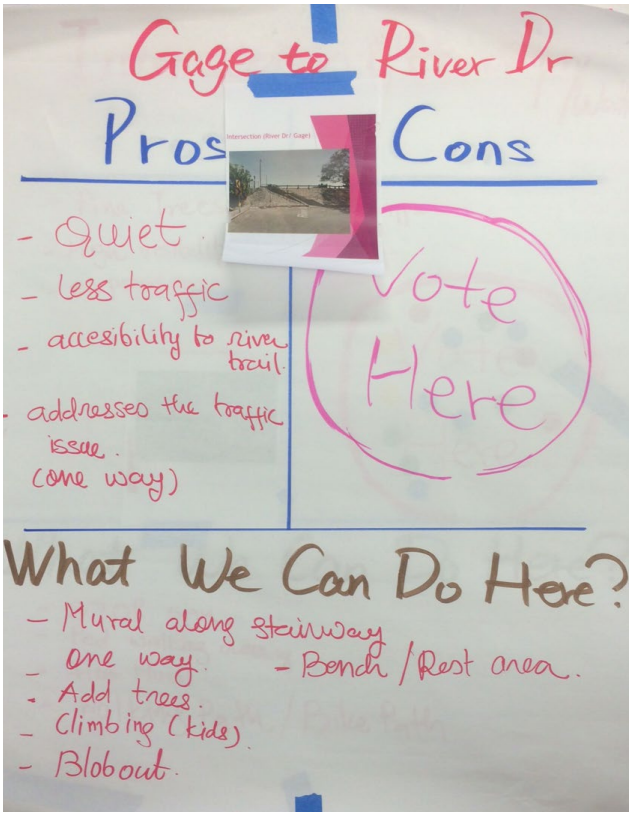


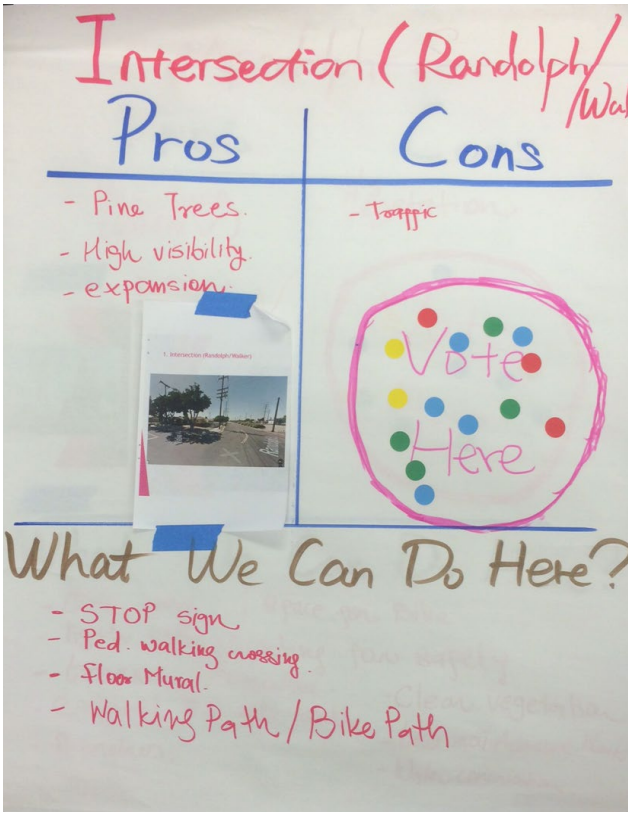
APPENDIX B

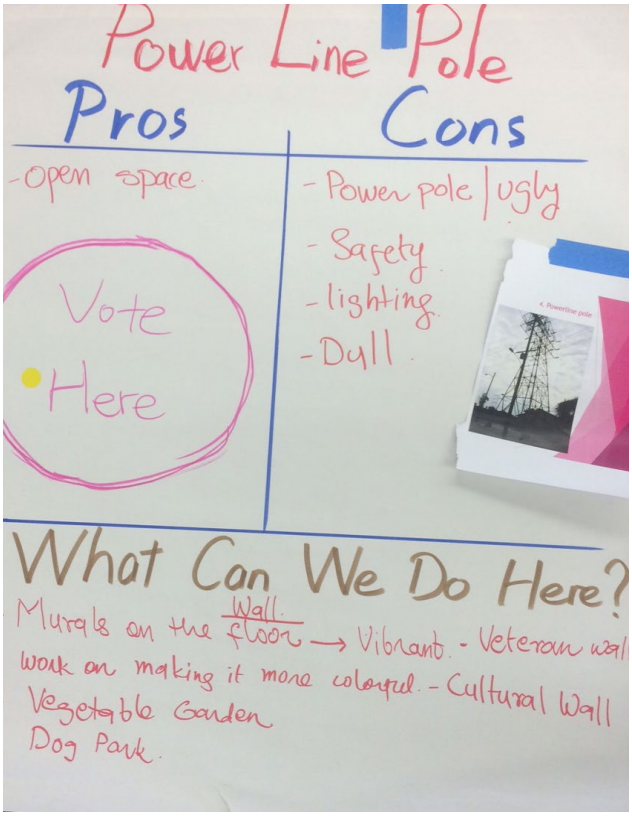

Big Pine Tree
Pros
Cons
- greater agreement
- Big / Spacious
- Shade Trees
- Slow down traffic
- train not frequent
- traffic
- Safety (train)
- noise
- Approval Longer (Union pacific)
- Vegetation (overgrown) (Safety)
What We Can Do Here?
- Hammock
Vote Here

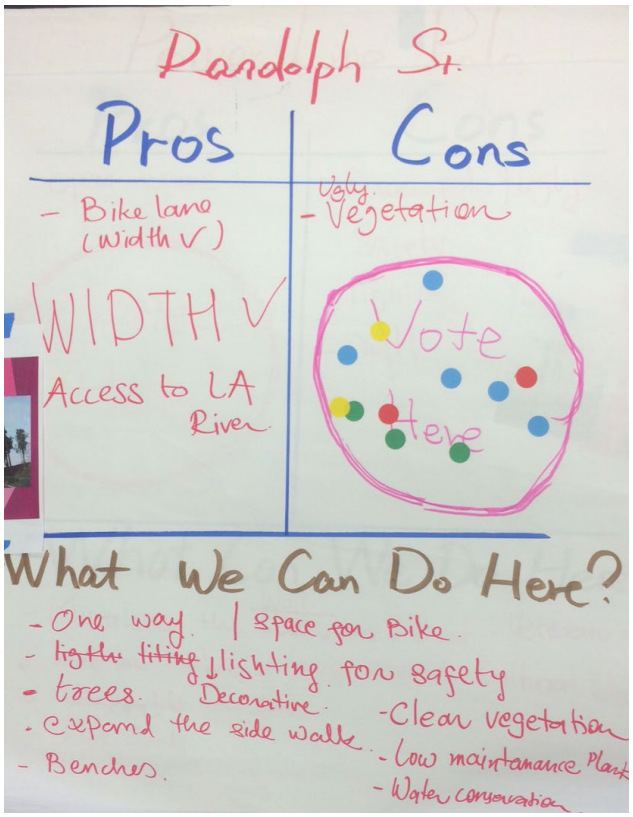

Big Tree & Bench
Pros
Cons
- Preserve trees
- Community building (gathering point)
- Safe community
- Productivity (Vegetation)
- tight space
- View (on River Dr)
Vote Here
What Can Do Here?

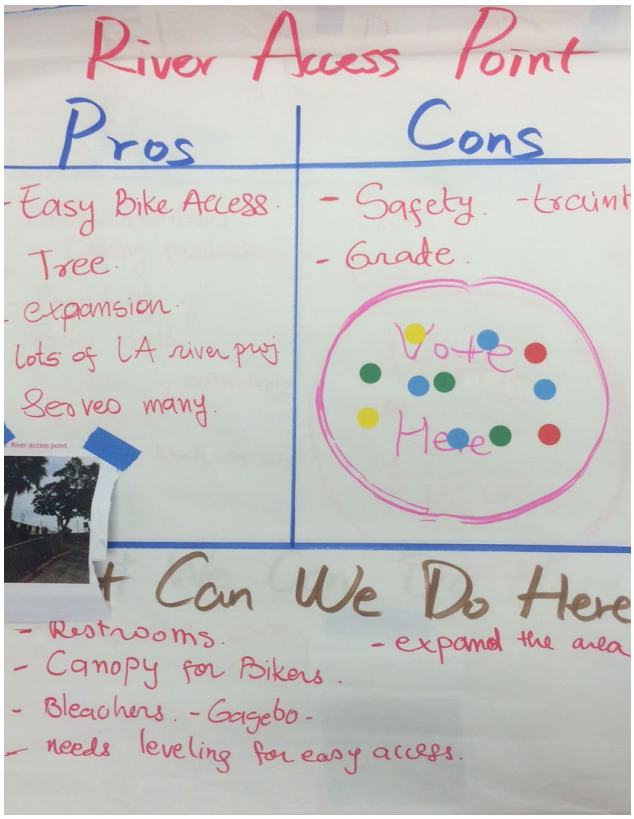

Filmore to River Dr
Pros
Cons
- Under Utilized (many possibilities)
- Possibility of Bike Path
- Possibilities of community engagement
- Safety for Woodlawn kids
- no trees
- Dull
Vote Here
What We Can Do Here?
- improve views

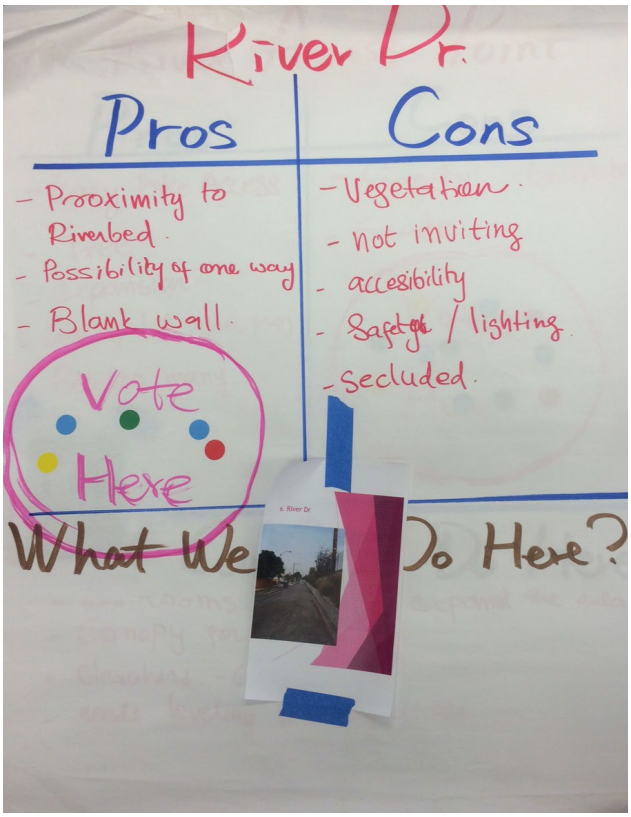

Gage to River Dr
Pros
Cons
- Quiet
- less traffic
- accesibility to river trail
- addressed the traffic issue (one way)
Vote Here
What We Can Do Here?
- Mural along stairway
- one way
- Add trees
- Climbing (kids)
- Blobout
- Bench / Rest area


Intersection (Randolph/Wa
Pros
Cons
- Pine Trees.
- High visibility.
- expansion.
- Traffic
Vote
Here
What We Can Do Here?
- STOP sign
- Ped. walking crossing.
- floor Mural.
- Walking Path / Bike Path


Power Line Pole
Pros
Cons
-open space.
- Power pole | ugly
- Safety.
- lighting.
- Dull.
Vote
Here
What Can We Do Here?
Murals on the Wall floor → Vibrant. - Veteran wall
work on making it more colorful. - Cultural Wall
Vegetable Garden
Dog Park.


Randolph St.
Pros
Cons
- Bike lane (width V)
Ugly
- Vegetation
WIDTH V
Access to LA River
Vote
Here
What We Can Do Here?
- One way. | space for Bike.
- lighting for safety
- trees. Decorative.
- expand the side walk.
- Benches.
-Clear vegetation
- Low maintenance Plant
- Water conservation


River Access Point
Pros
Cons
- Easy Bike Access.
Tree.
expansion.
lots of LA river proj
Served many.
- Safety. -traint
- Grade.
Vote
Here
Can We Do Here
- Restrooms.
- Canopy for Bikers.
- Bleachers. - Gazebo -
- needs leveling for easy access.
- expand the area



Appendix B.8 | **Design Workshop One Bilingual Flyer**

1st Design Workshop 10:00 AM Feb. 20th, Satuday
2nd Design Workshop 10:00 AM Feb. 27th, Satuday

Dear Mr/Ms. xxxx,

Thank you very much for your participation in the recent community vote meeting. We are very glad to keep you updated about the results of site selection process.

1. Intersection of Randolph St and Walker Ave = 14 votes
2. Randolph Street= 12 votes
3. River Access Point= 11 votes.

Next step is for you to decide what improvements you want to build at each of these sites. We sincerely invite you to participate in the design process with your neighbors. The design process will include two workshops. Our first design workshop is at 10 am, February 20th, Saturday at the intersection of Randolph St and River Dr. Our team is working on getting all the necessary approvals.

Thanks again for your precious time and generous help. Looking forward to seeing you at our coming design workshops.

Sincerely,
Team Bell

Querido Sr/Sra. xxxx,

Muchas gracias por su participación en la reciente reunión en la cual votamos junto con la comunidad. Queremos mantenerle al tanto de los resultados del proceso de selección de sitio.

1. Intersección de la Calle Randolph y la Avenida Walker = 14 votos
2. Calle Randolph = 12 votos
3. Punto de acceso al río = 11 votos.

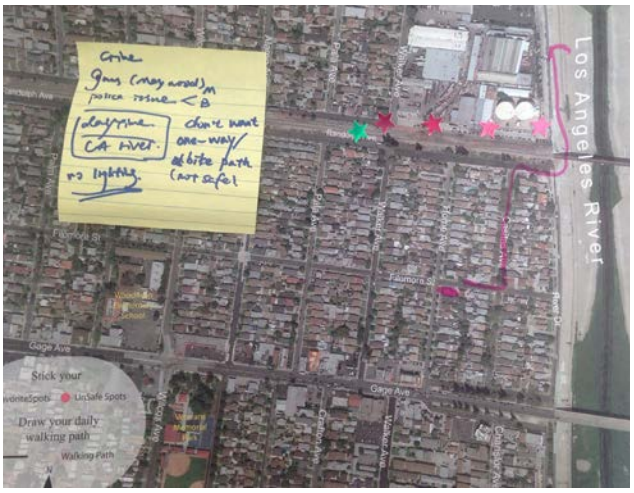
El siguiente paso es decidir qué tipo de mejoras quiere usted construir en cada uno de estos sitios. Queremos invitarle personalmente a participar en el proceso de diseño con sus vecinos. El proceso de diseño incluirá dos sesiones. Nuestra primera sesión será a las 10 a.m., el día Sábado 20 de Febrero; en la intersección de la Calle Randolph y River Drive. Nuestro equipo está trabajando arduamente para tener todo listo y aprobado para continuar con el proyecto.

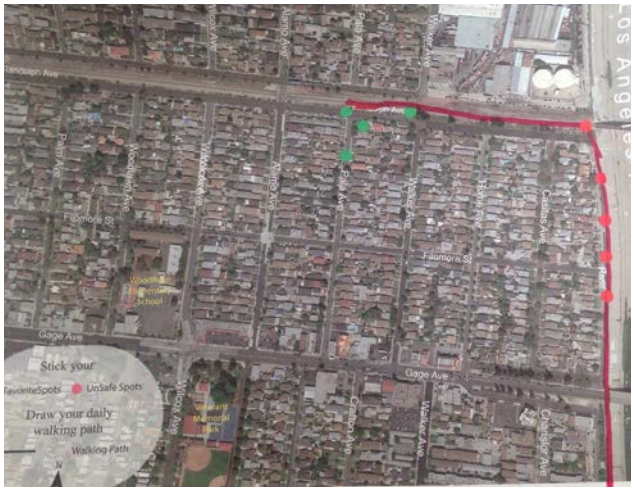
De nuevo, muchas gracias por su tan preciado tiempo y su generosa ayuda. Estamos ansiosos de verle en nuestras próximas sesiones de diseño.

Sinceramente,
Equipo Bell

Site selection vote meeting results

Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily walking path
Walking Path
Gage Ave


Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily walking path
Walking Path
Gage Ave


Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily walking path
Walking Path
Gage Ave

Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily walking path
Walking Path
Gage Ave

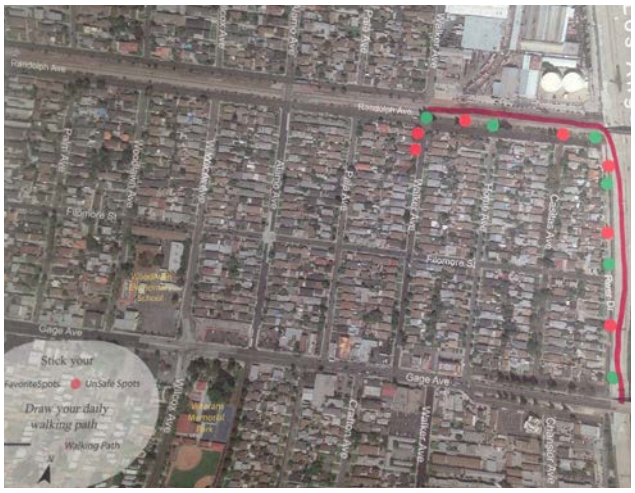
Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily walking path
Walking Path
Gage Ave

Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily walking path
Walking Path
Gage Ave

APPENDIX B

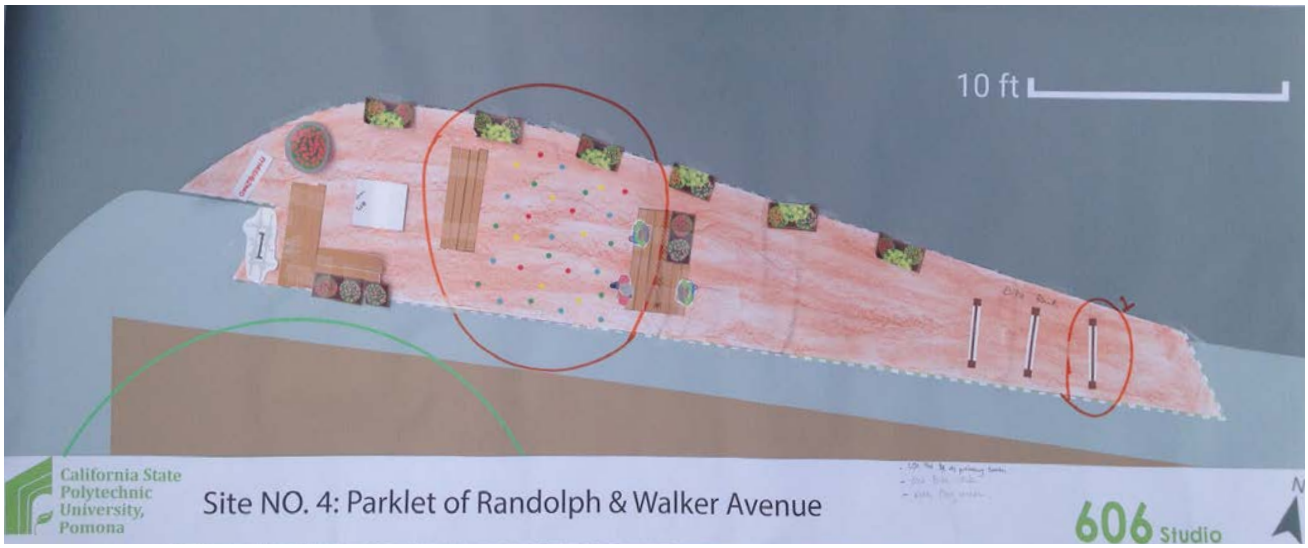
Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily
walking path

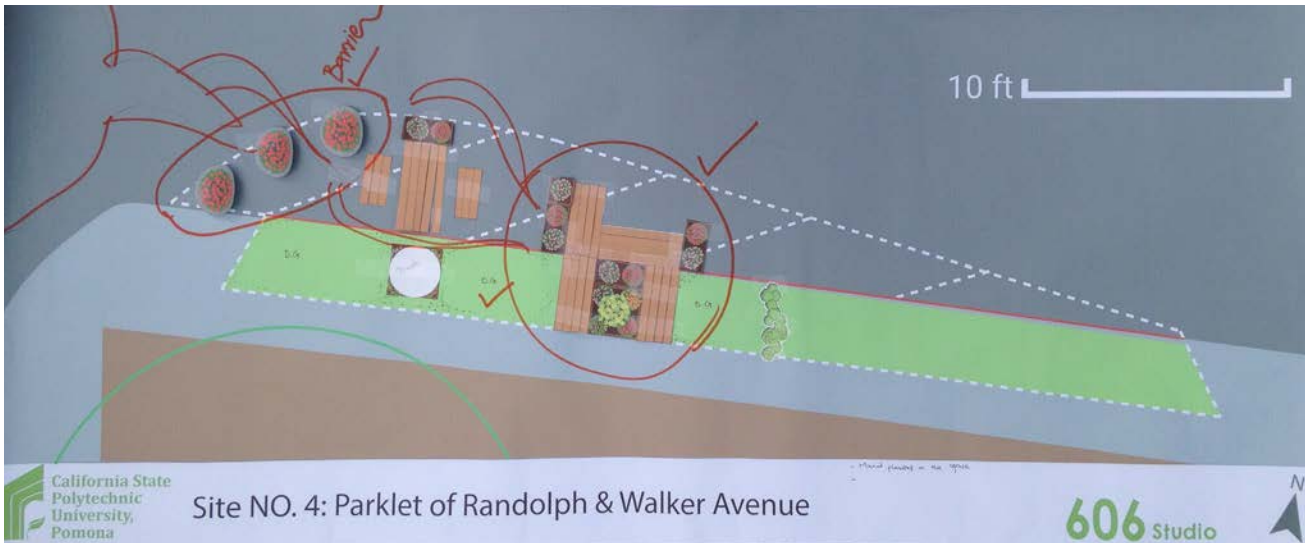
Los Angeles River

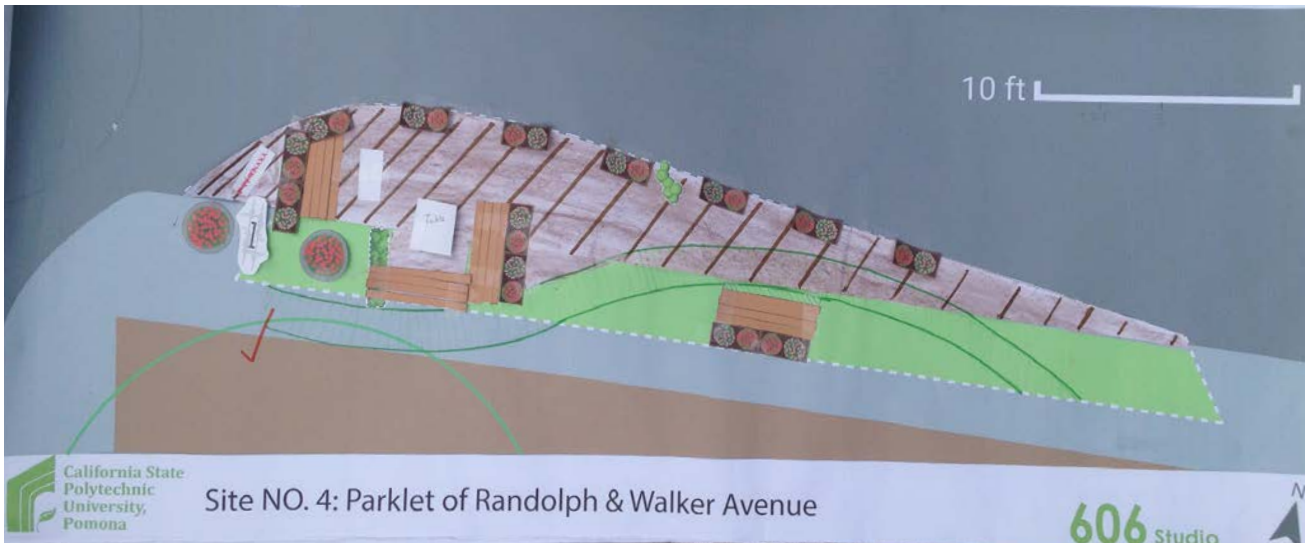

Stick your
Draw your daily
walking path

Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily
walking path

Los Angeles River
Stick your
Draw your daily
walking path


10 ft
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Site NO. 4: Parklet of Randolph & Walker Avenue
606 Studio
N


Barrier
10 ft
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Site NO. 4: Parklet of Randolph & Walker Avenue
606 Studio
N


10 ft
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Site NO. 4: Parklet of Randolph & Walker Avenue
606 Studio
N

Neighborhood Improvement Project

Proyecto de Mejormiento del Vecindario

California State Polytechnic University Pomona 606 Studio

Ground Cover

Turf

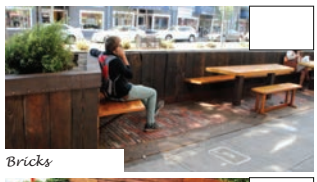
DG

Wood

Pavement

Notes

Ground Cover


Bricks

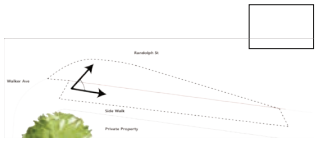
Asphalt/On the street

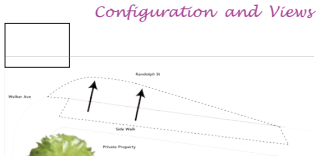
Stone

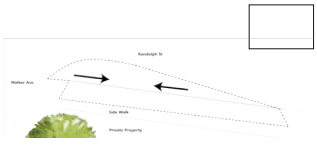
Paint on the street

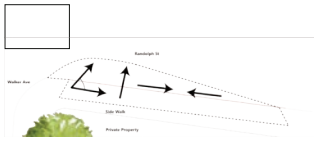
Notes

Configuration and Views


Facing railroad


Facing Randolph St

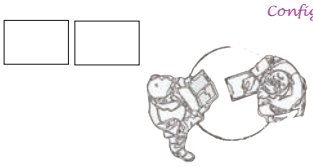

Facing internally

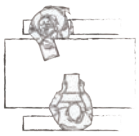

Combination

Notes

Configuration

Square

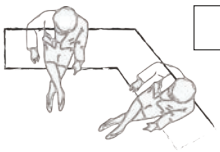

Circular

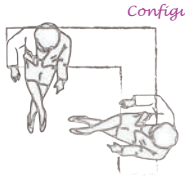

Picnic table

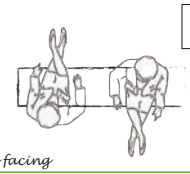
Table

Notes

Configuration


Angular


L- shape

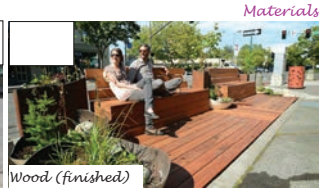

Opposite facing

Face to face

Notes

Materials

Wood (Raw)


Wood (finished)

Wood + Paint

Paint

Notes

Materials

Metal

Concrete

Recycled Material

Recycled + Painted

Notes

Table

Bar table

Table

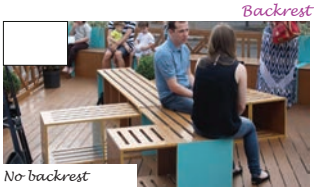
Picnic table

Multi-function

Notes

Backrest

Backrest


No backrest

Partial backrest

Backrest with plants

Notes

Play area and Art-work

Play area

Play area

Play area

Art- work

Notes

Bike parking area

Bike rack

Bike parking area

Bike rack

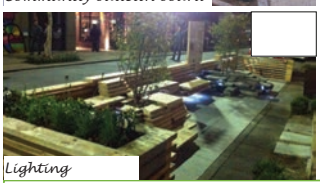
Bike rack

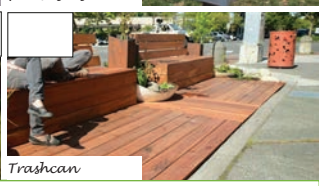
Notes

Other design elements

Community bulletin board

Pet waste station


Lighting


Trashcan

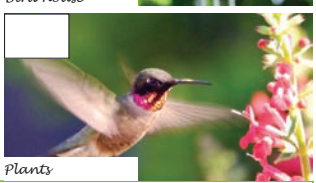
Notes

Serving other species

Bird bath

Bird house

Bird feeder


Plants

Notes

Serving other species

Butterfly

Bee

Notes

APPENDIX B

Appendix B.12 | Project Banner

Appendix B.13 | Project Proposal for The City of Bell

Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario
Neighborhood Improvement Project

Cal Poly Pomona- 606 studio project

The capstone project of the graduate program of landscape architecture at Cal Poly Pomona, the 606 studio has over 35 years of award-winning work serving multiple agencies such as municipalities, NGOs, community organizations and many more. The studio focuses on improving the environment in ways that improve every day life for people.

Neighborhood Improvement Project in Bell

This year's capstone project is attempting to address issues of access to open space, and environmental quality in South Los Angeles communities. One of the selected location for the 606 studio project is located in Bell, CA (figure 1).

The studio team is looking at developing community improvement project in a neighborhood in the city of Bell. Our approach is to work with community members to create temporary, removable improvement that can demonstrate what is possible. We have a grant from the Coastal Conservancy that will fund construction of the improvements.

Figure 1 Location map

Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario
Neighborhood Improvement Project

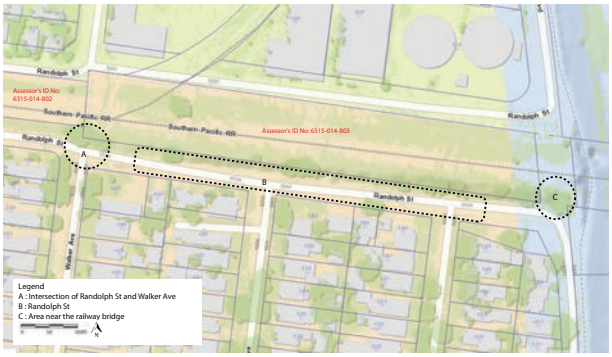


Figure 2 Parcel map showing 3 possible locations

Discussions with residents have led to the following items as potential elements or activities which residents would like to see in their community.

- Bike path
- Walking path
- Dog walking area
- Sitting areas
- Vegetable garden
- Exercise equipment

Figure 3 Mural at intersection • DIY Dog park • Sitting area

Appendix B.14 | Team Business Cards

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Charmy J. Adesara

(213)-399-5331
charmy.nip@gmail.com

606 Studio

Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario
Neighborhood Improvement Project

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Mona J. Dang

(949)-656-9966
mona.nip@gmail.com

606 Studio

Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario
Neighborhood Improvement Project

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

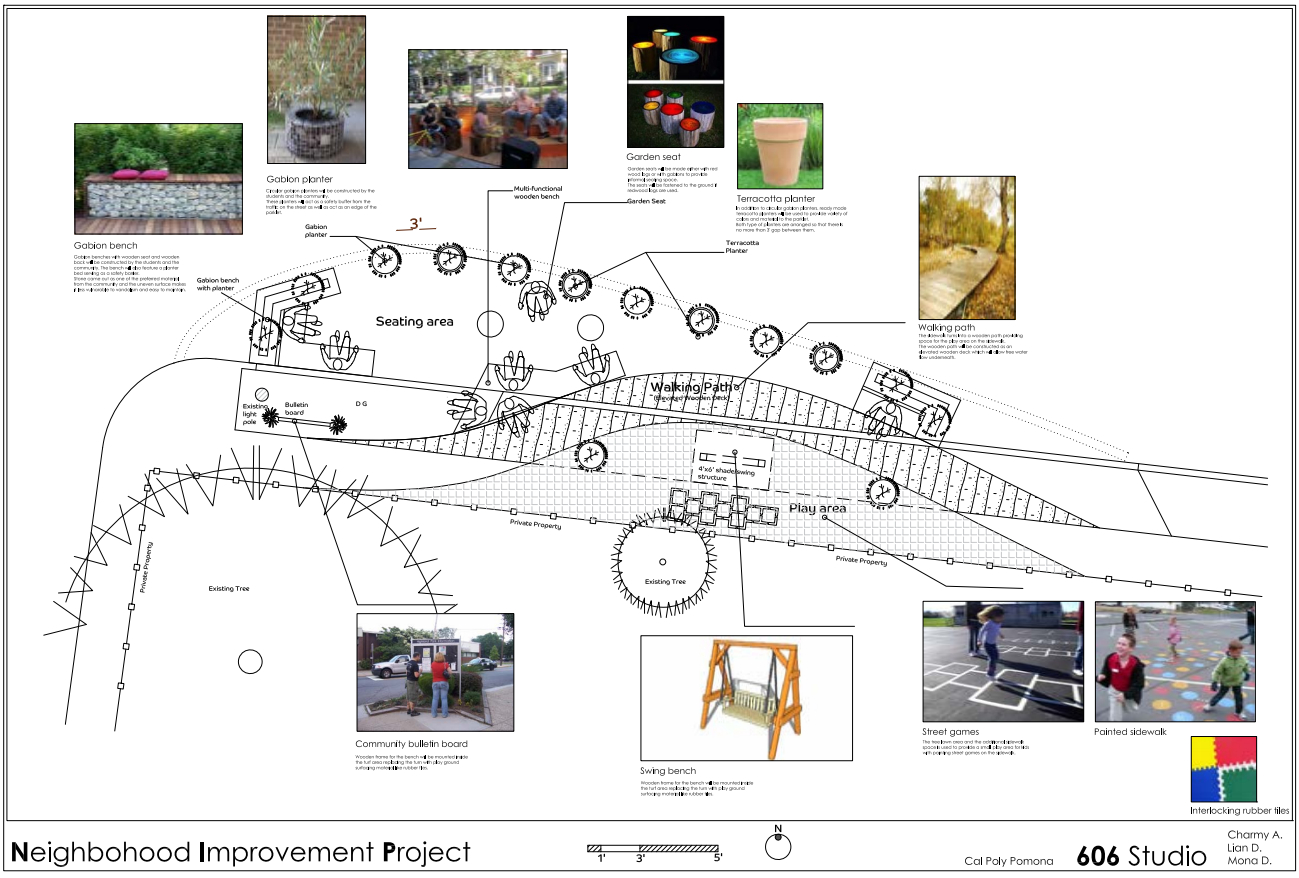
Lian W. Ding

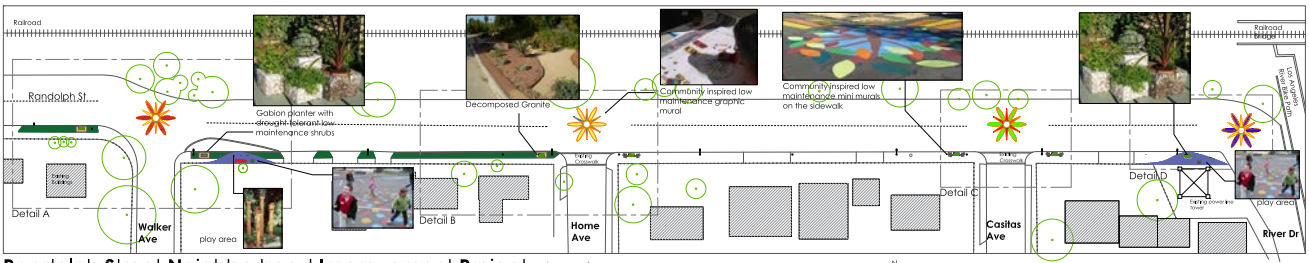
(626)-698-5065
lian.nip@gmail.com

606 Studio

Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario
Neighborhood Improvement Project

Appendix B.15 | Parklet at the Intersection of Randolph Street and Walker Avenue Final Design



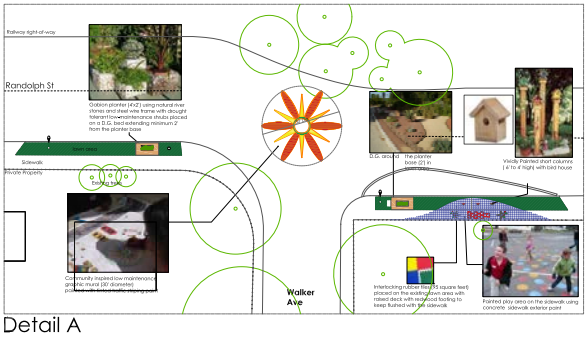


Randolph **S**treet **N**eighborhood **I**mprovement **P**roject
Master Plan

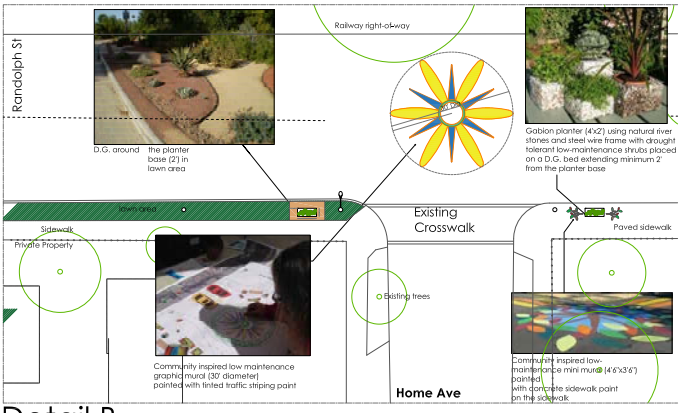
Legend
Existing Tree
Existing Sidewalk Lawn Area
Existing Buildings
Proposed Planters
Proposed D.G.
Proposed Play Area

Cal Poly Pomona **606** Studio

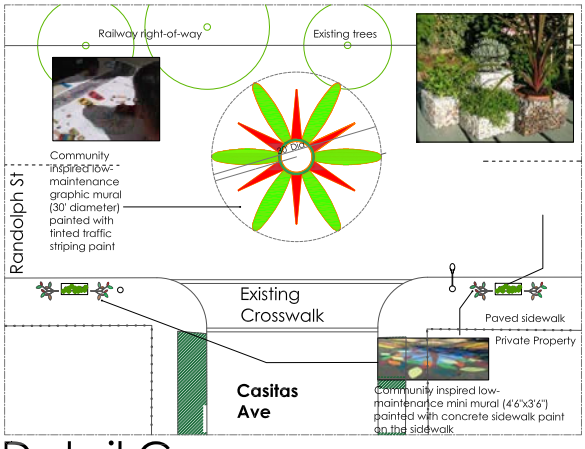
Charmy A.
Lian D.
Mona D.



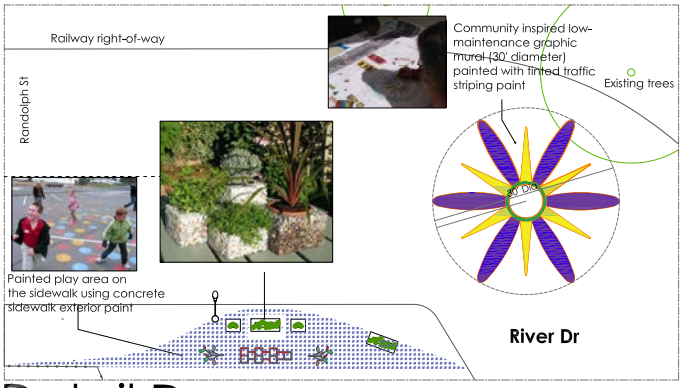
Detail A



Detail B

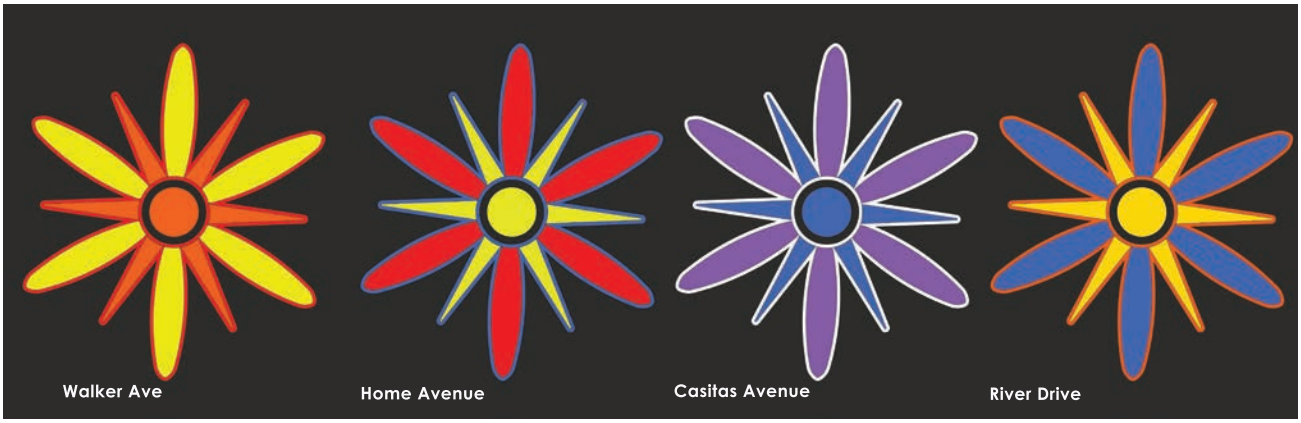


Detail C

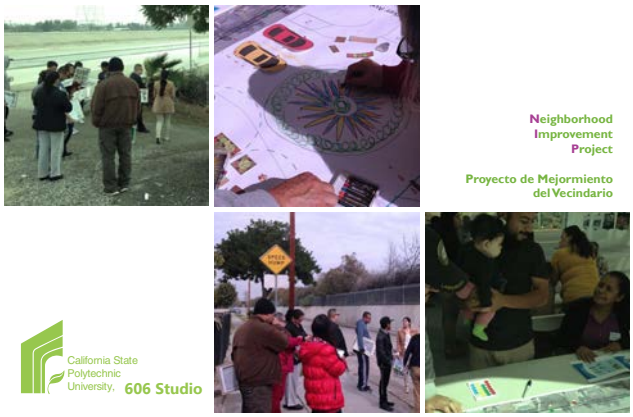


Detail D

Appendix B.17 | Street Mural Color Details



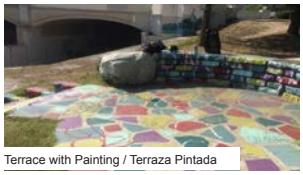
Appendix B.18 | Design Workshop Four Design Element Detail Booklet



Wheelchair Access / Accesso para Sillas de Ruedas

Park Access Near the Street / Acceso al Parque Cerca de la Calle

Terrace / Terraza


Terrace with Painting / Terraza Pintada

Wood Terrace /Terraza de Madera

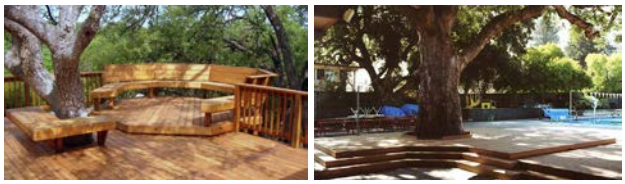
Terrace Stone/ Terraza de Piedra

Terrace Garden / Terraza en el Jardín

Tree House for Kids / Casita del Arbol Para Niños

Gate / Verja

Deck Around Tree / Cubierta Alrededor del Arbol



Wildlife/ Fauna Silvestre

Bird Feeder / Comedero Para Pájaros

Bird House / Casa del Pájaros

Bird Bath / Bebederos para Pájaros

Butterfly Feeder / Alimentador para Mariposas

Shade Structure / Pergola

Water Fountain / Fuente de Agua

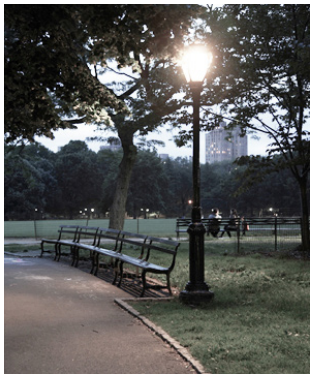
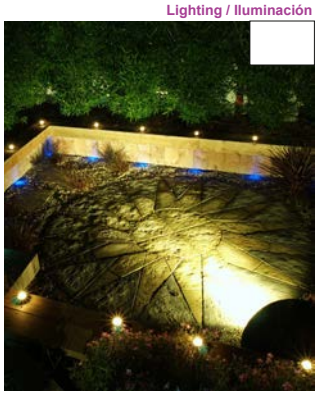
For humans / Para Humanos

For Humans and Pets / Para Humanos y Mascotas

Pet Waste Station / Estación de Desechos de las Mascotas

APPENDIX D

Lighting / Iluminación

Trash Can / Bote de Basura

Exercise Facilities / Aparatos

Education Board / Cartel de Educación

Table & Bench / La Mesa y el Banco

Configuration of Benches / La Configuración de los Bancos

Dear

It was very nice meeting with you at the Randolph and Walker Avenue parklet design workshop in March. We sincerely thank you for your strong support and interest in our Neighborhood Improvement Project. There is no way we can go this far in the project and achieve eventual success without your participation. Since last meeting, we have been making strong effort to get approval for the on-site landscape construction from the city. We are very excited to inform you that we have made steady progress on the mission and would like to update you on that with more details.

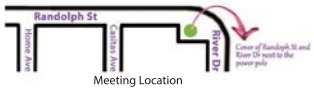
With that, we are very pleased to invite you to the upcoming community meeting to be held on S**aturday April 23th at 10:00 am** at the intersection of Randolph Street and River Drive, the same open space under the power line.

The meeting agenda include two major items:
1. Introduction of the city's decision on the construction application
2. A design workshop on long-term project design in the community

Specifically, the long-term project aims at improving our neighborhood landscape and environments of the river access point. For this meeting, we would like to learn from you what kind of projects you want to see on this site and review the 3 design plans we created.
We need your participation and ideas! Please join us in this exciting design event, which will bring positive change to the physical and social environment of your community. Food and drinks will be provided during the meeting.

Thank you so much again for you interest
We look forward to see you at the meeting
Sincerely,

Neighborhood Improvement Project
Landscape Architecture 606 Studio
Cal Poly Pomona



Meeting Location

Querida

Ha sido un placer conocerle durante la pasada sesión de diseño comunitario, llevada a cabo en la intersección de la calle Randolph y Walker Avenue en el mes de Marzo. Agradecemos sinceramente su apoyo e interés en el Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario. Es gracias a su participación que hemos podido llegar tan lejos con esta iniciativa.
Desde la última reunión hemos estado tratando de obtener la aprobación por parte de la ciudad para poder construir nuestro proyecto. Desde entonces, hemos progresado bastante y queríamos actualizarle con información detallada y más reciente de nuestros avances.
En base a esto, es todo un placer invitarle a nuestra próxima reunión que será llevada a cabo este próximo **Sábado 23 de Abril, a las 10:00 a.m**. en la esquina e intersección de la calle Randolph con River Drive, en el mismo espacio abierto debajo de la torre eléctrica.

Nuestro itinerario incluye dos actividades principales:
1. Introducción de los acuerdos hechos por la ciudad acerca de la construcción del proyecto.
2. Una sesión de diseño para nuestro próximo proyecto de diseño a largo plazo.

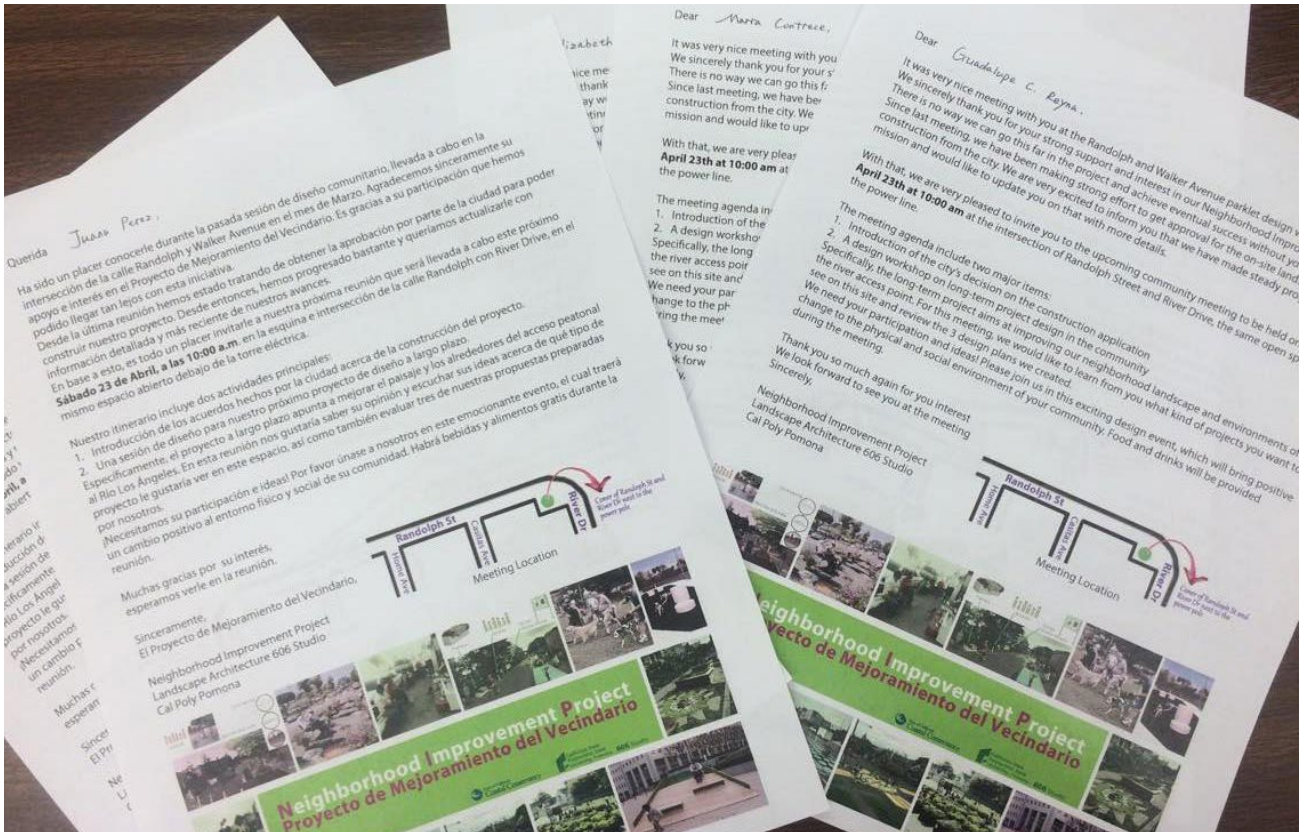
Específicamente, el proyecto a largo plazo apunta a mejorar el paisaje y los alrededores del acceso peatonal al Río Los Ángeles. En esta reunión nos gustaría saber su opinión y escuchar sus ideas acerca de qué tipo de proyecto le gustaría ver en este espacio, así como también evaluar tres de nuestras propuestas preparadas por nosotros.
¡Necesitamos su participación e ideas! Por favor únase a nosotros en este emocionante evento, el cual traerá un cambio positivo al entorno físico y social de su comunidad. Habrá bebidas y alimentos gratis durante la reunión.

Muchas gracias por su interés,
esperamos verle en la reunión.

Sinceramente,
El Proyecto de Mejoramiento del Vecindario,

Neighborhood Improvement Project
Landscape Architecture 606 Studio
Cal Poly Pomona

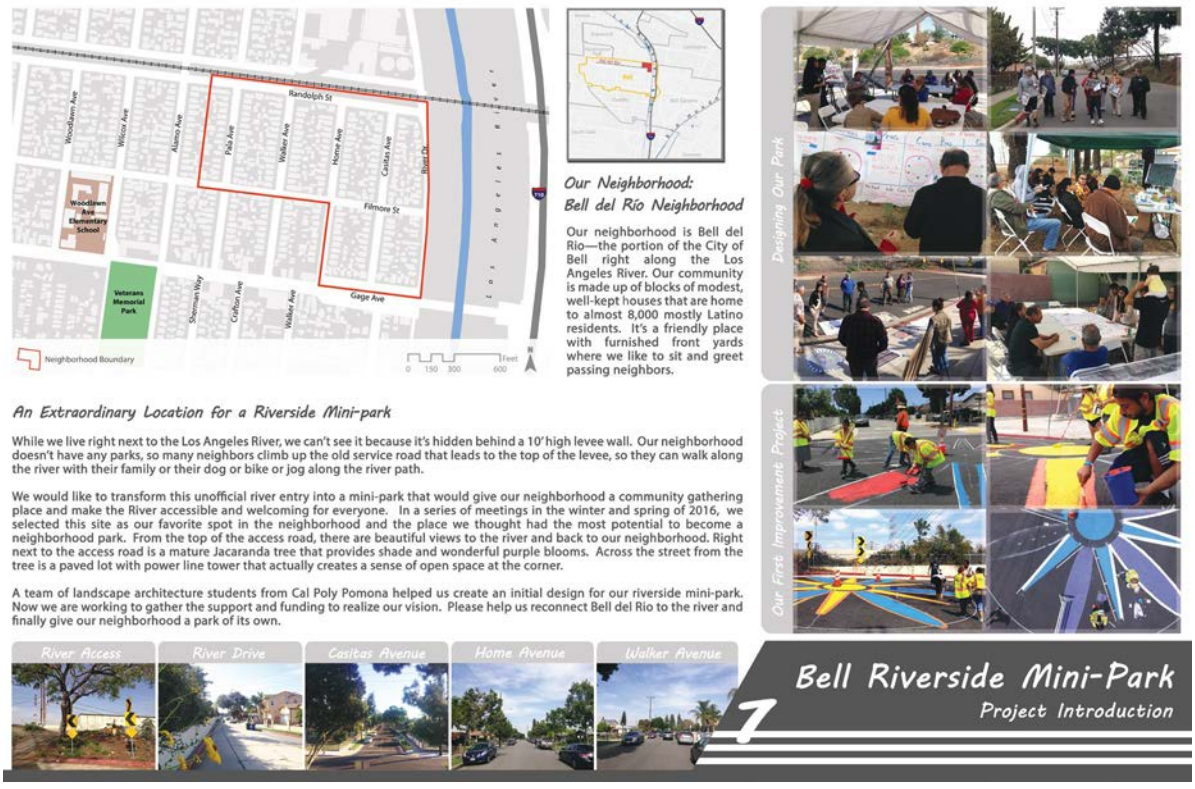
Meeting Location



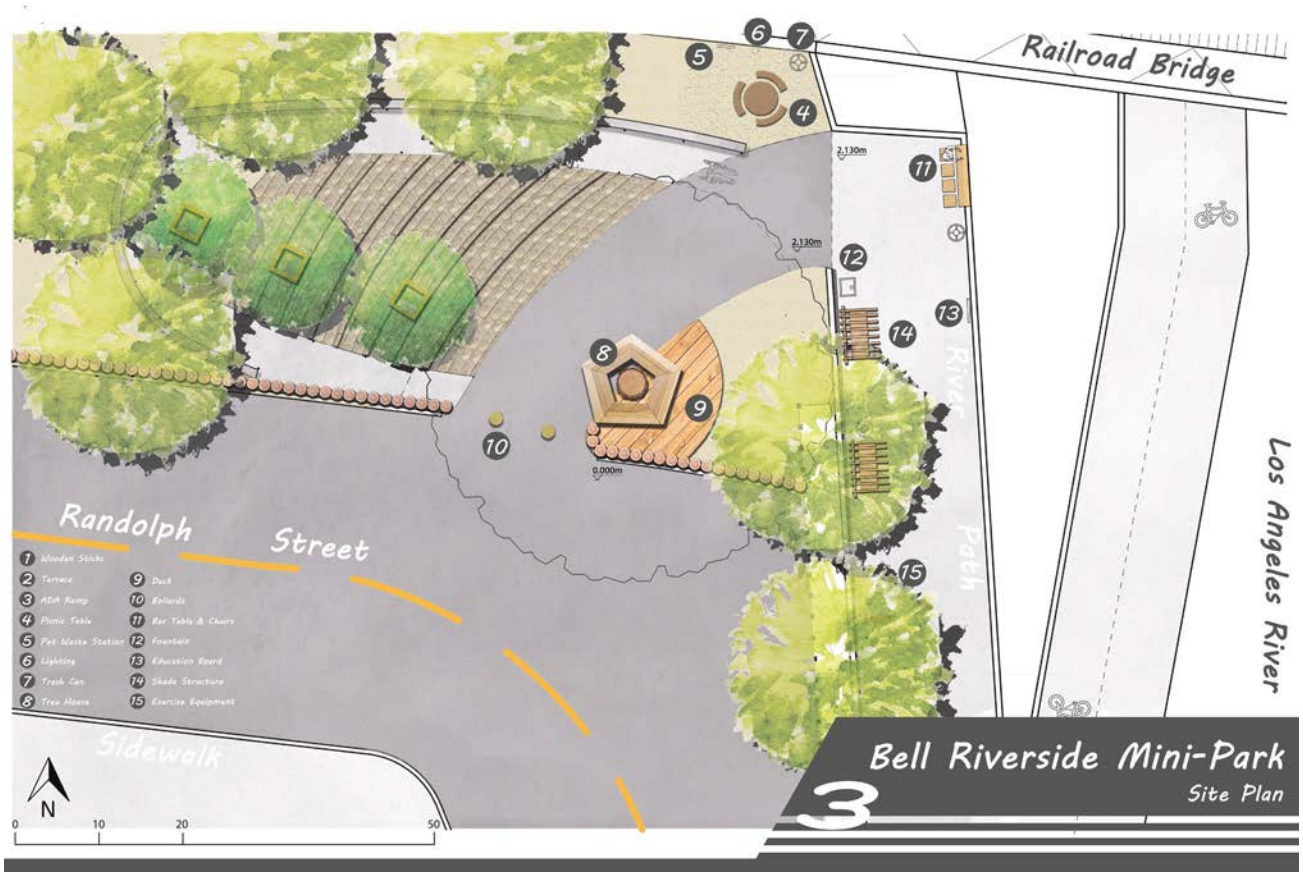
APPENDIX D

Appendix B.20 | Mural Painting Event Flyer

Appendix B.21 | Long-Term Project Presentation Boards



Perspective of River Access
Railroad
Existing Tree
Existing Tree
Bridge
Existing Bush
Randolph Street
Randolph Street
Site Plan
River Path
River Drive
River Drive
Power Line
0 10 20 100
Bell Riverside Mini-Park
2
Site Existing Condition Introduction


Railroad Bridge
Randolph Street
Sidewalk
River Path
Los Angeles River
1 Wooden Stitchs
2 Terrace
3 ADA Ramp
4 Picnic Table
5 Pet Waste Station
6 Lighting
7 Trash Can
8 Tree House
9 Deck
10 Bollards
11 Bar Table & Chairs
12 Fountain
13 Education Board
14 Shade Structure
15 Exercise Equipment
N
0 10 20 50
Bell Riverside Mini-Park
3
Site Plan

APPENDIX D

Appendix C.1 | Canvassing Bilingual Flyer

The Reclaiming the River in Cudahy project seeks to create connections between the community and the L.A. River. Residents and designers will work together to plan, design, and build a project in 2016. Let's turn your neighborhood vision into reality!

El proyecto de la Recuperación del Río en Cudahy busca conectar a la comunidad con el Río L.A. Los residentes y diseñadores trabajarán juntos planeando, diseñando y construyendo un proyecto para el año 2016. ¡Vamos a convertir su visión del vecindario en realidad!

Please contact us with questions or to get involved!

¡Pónganse en contacto con nosotros para preguntar o para involucrarse!

Adam Kehoss amkehoss@cpp.edu
Matt Moffa mjmoffa@cpp.edu
Jeremy Munns jcmunns@cpp.edu
Winnie Xie feixie@cpp.edu
(909) 869-2673
Cal Poly Pomona

Reclaiming the River in Cudahy

Recuperación del Río en Cudahy

A Safe and Healthy Neighborhood

Una Comunidad Saludable y Segura

- Improve your quality of life
- Connect with the Los Angeles River
- Help the local environment

- *Mejoren su calidad de vida*
- *Creen conexiones con el Río Los Ángeles*
- *Ayuden al medio ambiente*

Get Involved!

¡Sé Parte del Cambio!

- Join your neighbors to choose a community improvement project
- Come together to create a design
- Build a complete project by June 2016

- *Únanse a sus vecinos y decidan un proyecto que mejore la comunidad*
- *Diseñen algo para su comunidad*
- *Construyan un completo proyecto para Junio de 2016*

Local Students Collaborating With The Community

Estudiantes Locales Colaborando con la Comunidad

WHO WE ARE:

- Graduate students and faculty of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona
- Funded by the California Coastal Conservancy

¿QUIÉNES SOMOS?:

- *Estudiantes de posgrado y profesores de Arquitectura del Paisaje en Cal Poly Pomona*
- *Financiado por la Conservación Costera de California*

Appendix C.2 | Committee Member Holiday Greeting Letter

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Thank you for attending our first committee meeting for the Cudahy neighborhood improvement project. We really appreciate your time and interest in working with us to help make your neighborhood a better place.

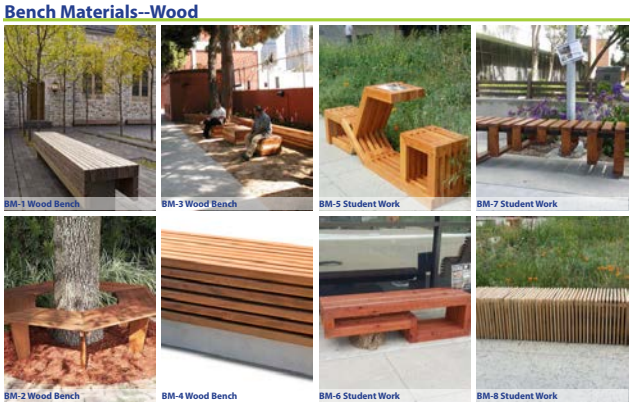
We wish you and your family a happy holiday season and look forward to working with you in the upcoming year!

Our next committee meeting will be held the second week of January. We will contact you with the date and location.

Happy New Year!

— Jeremy, Matt, Adam, and Winnie

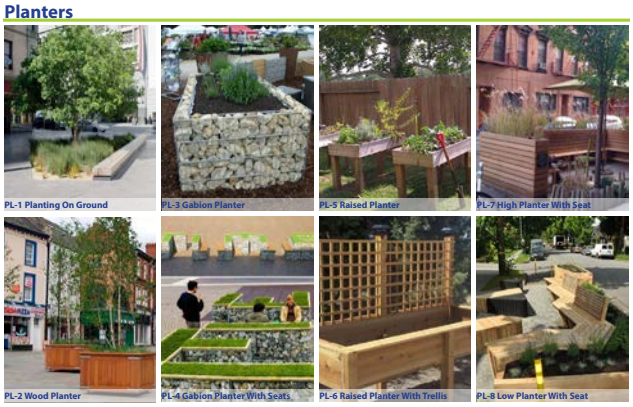
Bench Materials--Wood



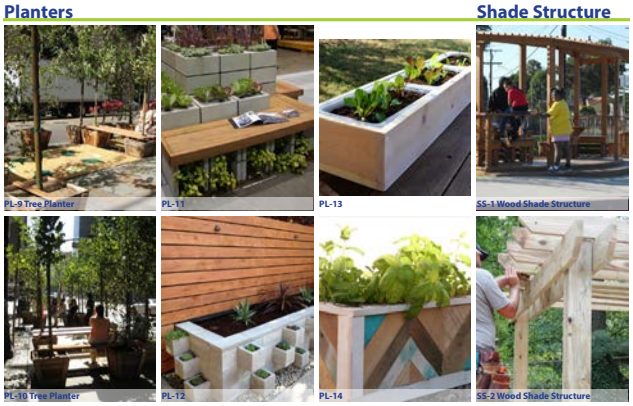
Bench Materials--Concrete & Gabion

Bench Back

Planters

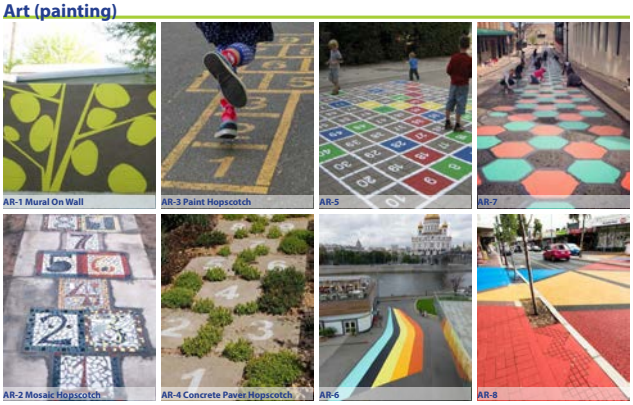


Planters

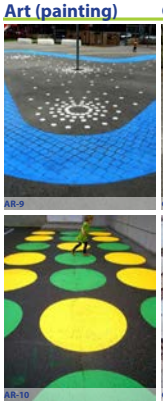


Shade Structure

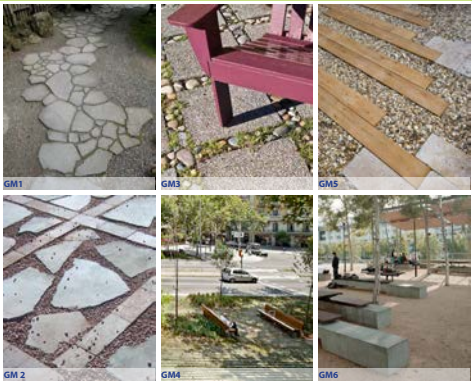
Art (painting)



Art (painting)



Ground Materials



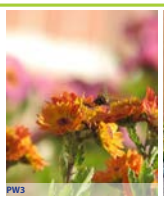
Shade Trees

Shrub Hedges

APPENDIX C

Plants for wildlife

PW1


PW3

PW2

PW4

Succulent

SU1

SU3

SU2

SU4

Appendix C.4 | Site Selection Booklet

Safety & Recreation
Seguridad y Recreación

NOTAS

NOTES

Walking
Caminando

Possible Locations
Ubicaciones Posibles

NOTES

Appendix C.5 | Committee Meeting Design Synthesis Result

Appendix C.6 | Community Meeting Bilingual Flyer

Help Improve Your Neighborhood!

Meet at Cudahy Park

date	time
30 Jan 2016	1:00 pm

Choose a Project
Choose a Location

A Project of Cal Poly Pomona University
Landscape Architecture

¡Ayuden a mejorar su comunidad!

Únansenos en el Parque de Cudahy

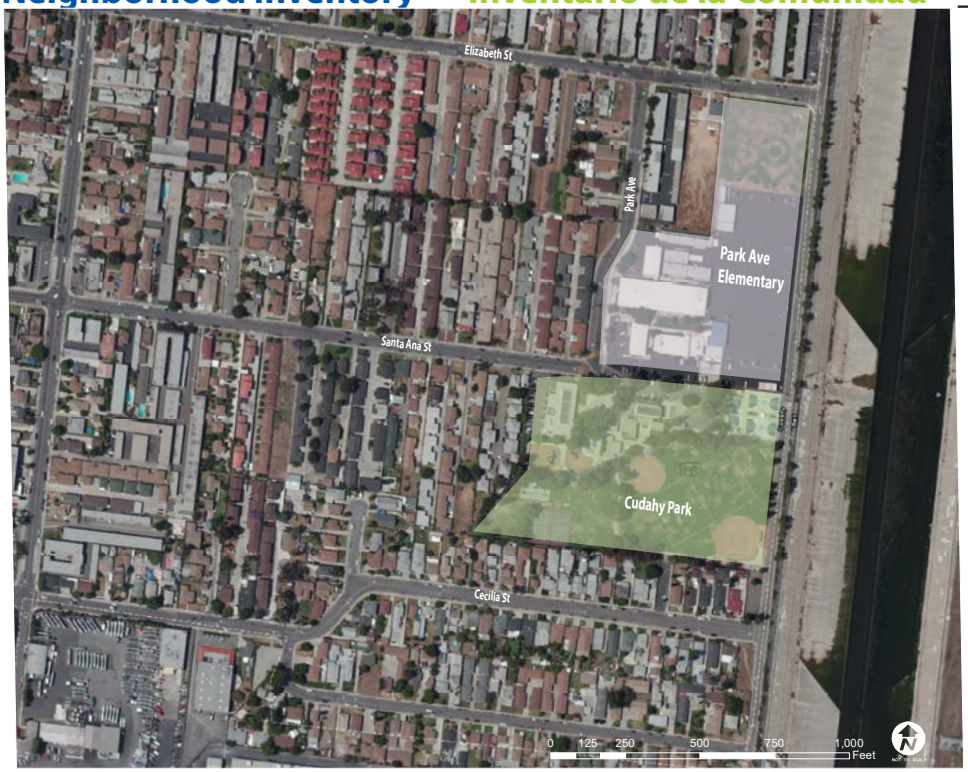
fecha	hora
30 Enero 2016	1:00 pm

Elijan un Proyecto
Decidan el sitio

Un Proyecto de la Universidad de Cal Poly Pomona
Arquitectura del Paisaje

Appendix C.7 | Site Walk Mapping Exercise

Neighborhood Inventory **Inventario de la Comunidad**



Name
Nombre

Dark areas
Las áreas oscuras

Graffitti
Grafiti

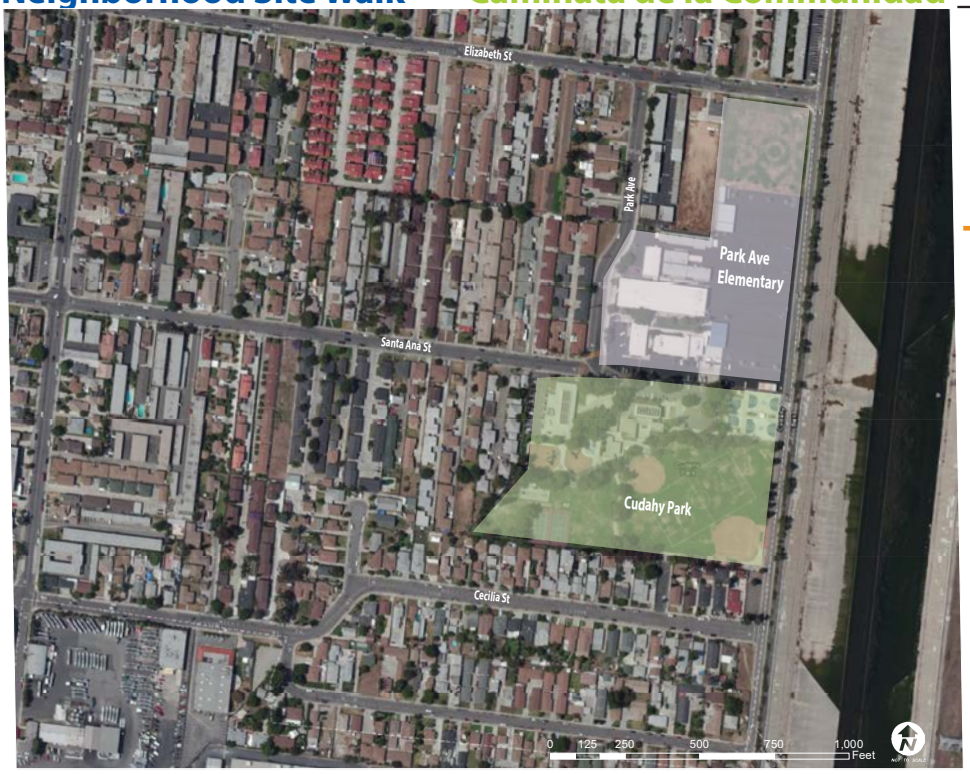
Bad smells
Lugares de mal olor

Noisy
Ruidoso

Notes : Notas:

Neighborhood Site Walk

Caminata de la Communidad



Name
Nombre

Favorite location
Ubicación favorita

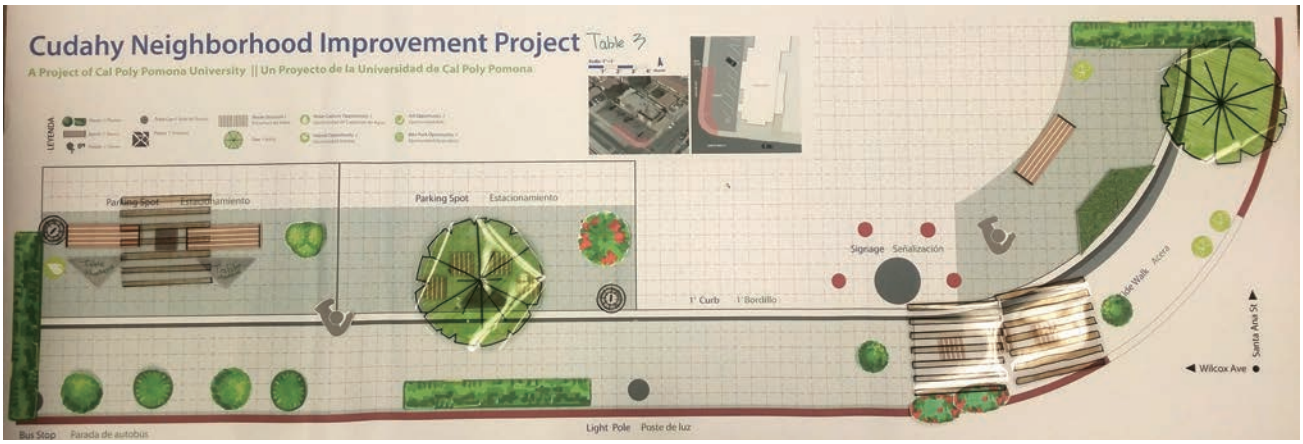
Potential project
Un sitio potencial del proyecto

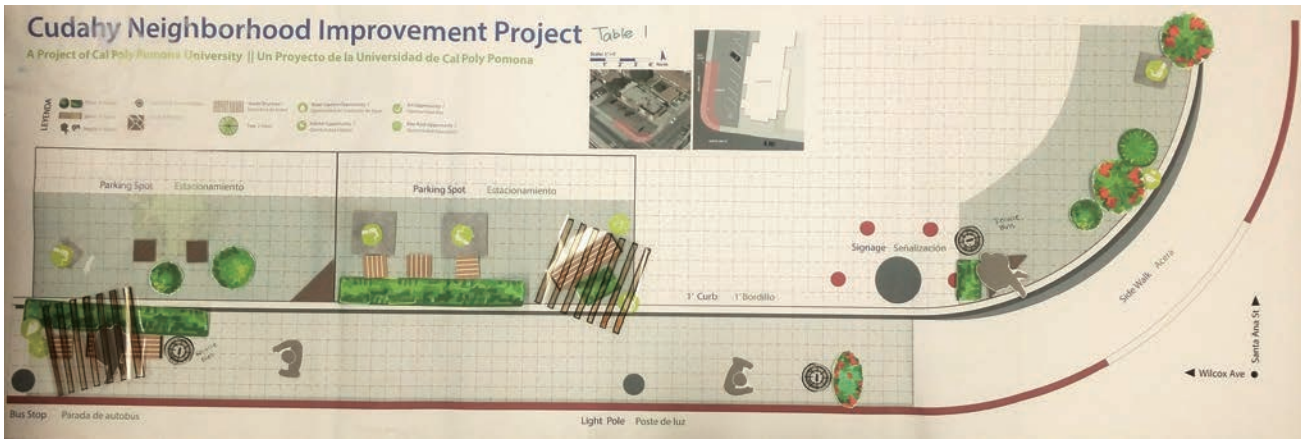
Unsafe
Inseguro

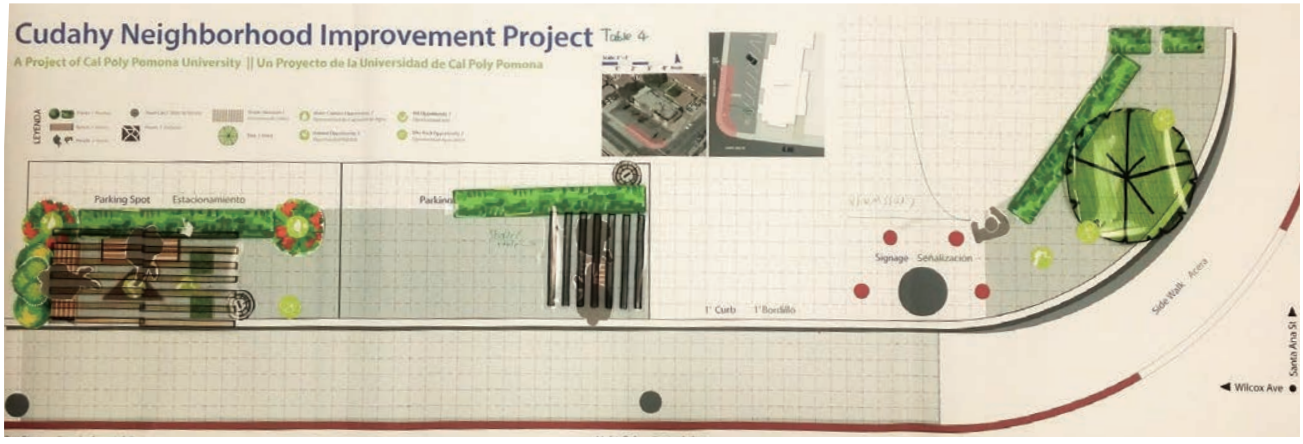
Where do you walk ?
¿Donde caminas?

Notes : Notas:

APPENDIX C

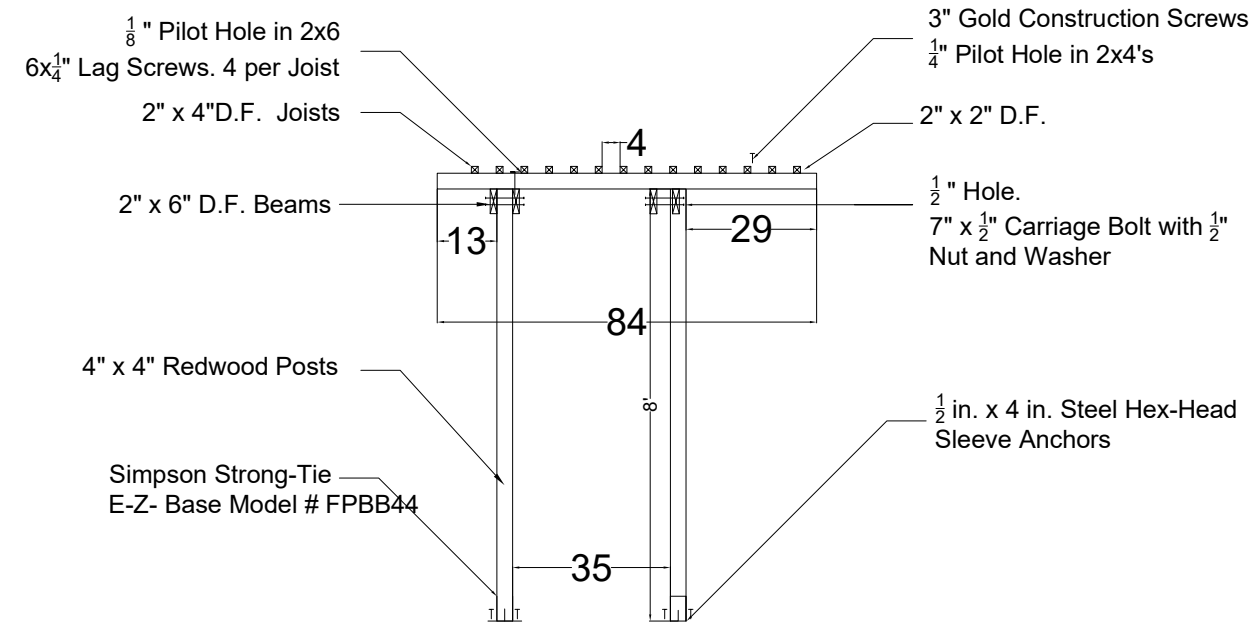

Cudahy Neighborhood Improvement Project
Table 3
A Project of Cal Poly Pomona University || Un Proyecto de la Universidad de Cal Poly Pomona
LEYENDA
Parking Spot Estacionamiento
Parking Spot Estacionamiento
Signage Señalización
1' Curb 1' Bordillo
Side Walk Acera
Santa Ana St
Wilcox Ave
Bus Stop Parada de autobus
Light Pole Poste de luz


Cudahy Neighborhood Improvement Project
Table 1
A Project of Cal Poly Pomona University || Un Proyecto de la Universidad de Cal Poly Pomona
LEYENDA
Parking Spot Estacionamiento
Parking Spot Estacionamiento
Signage Señalización
3' Curb 1' Bordillo
Side Walk Acera
Santa Ana St
Wilcox Ave
Bus Stop Parada de autobus
Light Pole Poste de luz

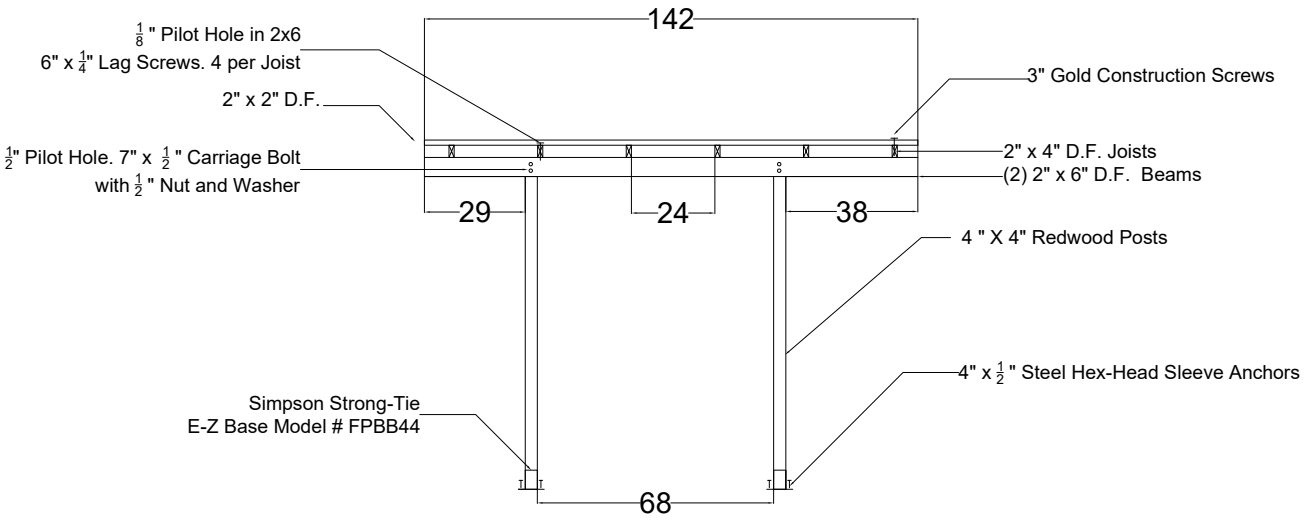

Cudahy Neighborhood Improvement Project
Table 4
A Project of Cal Poly Pomona University || Un Proyecto de la Universidad de Cal Poly Pomona
LEYENDA
Parking Spot Estacionamiento
Signage Señalización
1' Curb 1' Bordillo
Side Walk Acera
Santa Ana St
Wilcox Ave

Cudahy Neighborhood Improvement Project
Table 1
A Project of Cal Poly Pomona University || Un Proyecto de la Universidad de Cal Poly Pomona
LEYENDA
Carniceria
Concrete Pad
Losa de Concreto
1' Curb
1' Bordillo
Santa Ana St
Side Walk Acera
+ COMMUNITY LIBRARY

Cudahy Neighborhood Improvement Project
Table 2
A Project of Cal Poly Pomona University || Un Proyecto de la Universidad de Cal Poly Pomona
LEYENDA
Carniceria
Concrete Pad
Losa de Concreto
1' Curb
1' Bordillo
Santa Ana St
Side Walk Acera
Jim Ortega & Alexis Ortega

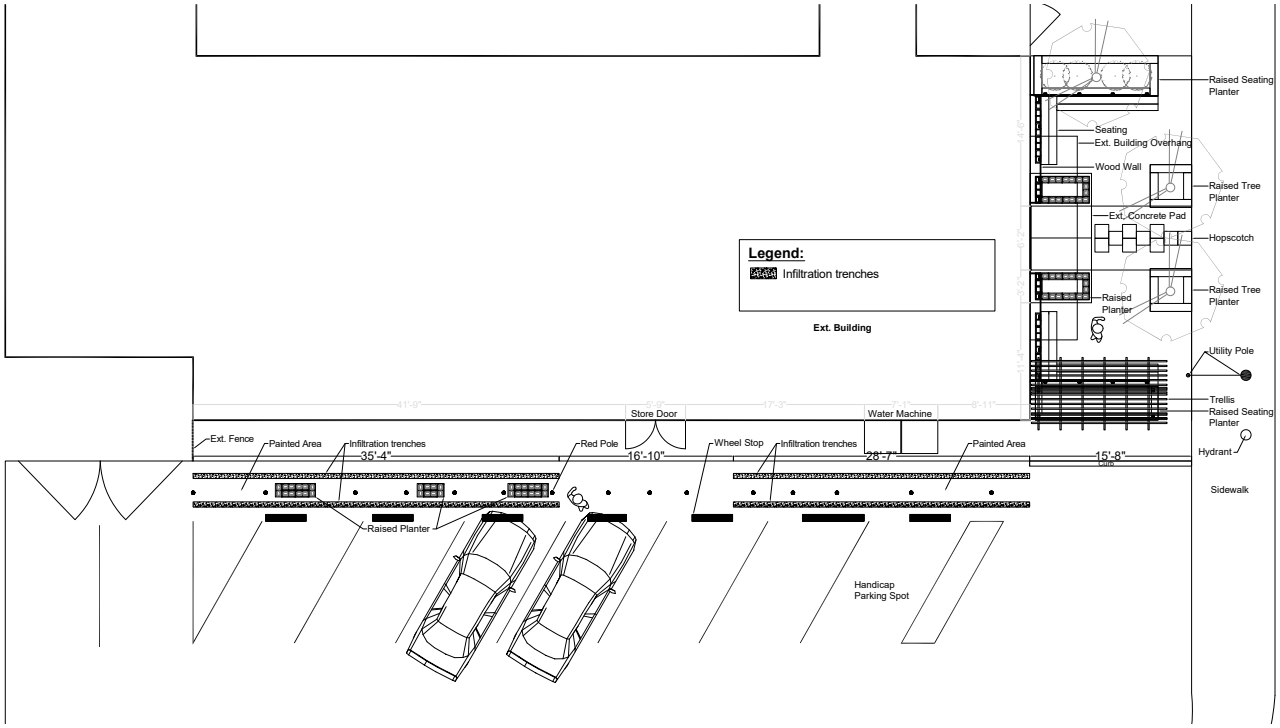


Trellis Front View

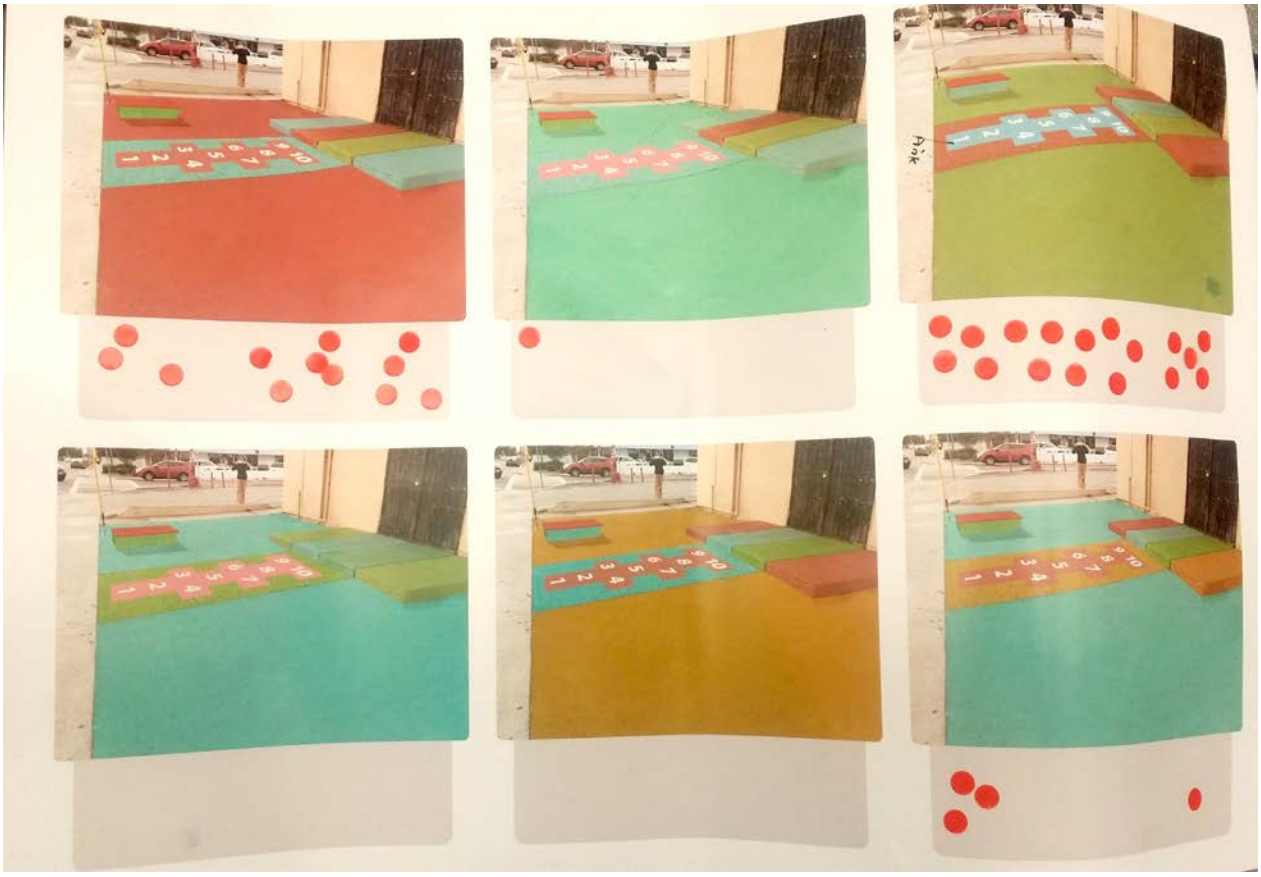


Trellis Side View

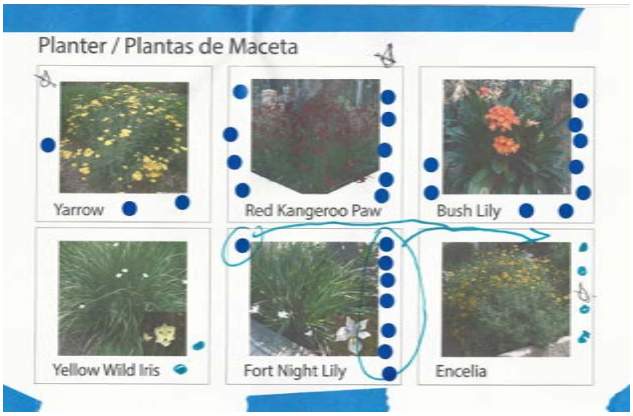
Appendix C.11 | Full Site Plan Construction Document



Appendix C.12 | Construction Color Scheme Vote Result



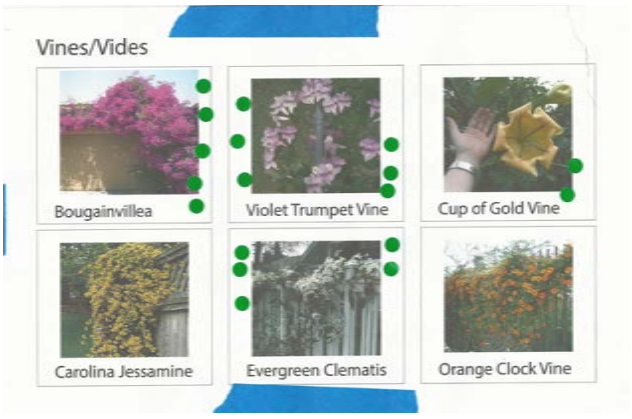
APPENDIX D


Planter / Plantas de Maceta
Yarrow
Red Kangeroo Paw
Bush Lily
Yellow Wild Iris
Fort Night Lily
Encelia

Planter Plants / Plantas de Maceta
Mexican Daisy
Daylily
Coral Bells
Red Hot Poker
Sea Lavendar
Lily Turf

Planter / Plantas de Maceta
Rosemary
Blue-eyed Grass
Bird of Paradise
Trailing Lantana
Verbena
Wooly Blue Curls

Succulents/Suculentas
Irish Rose
Coral Aloe
C.A. Live Forever
Hens and Chicks
Chinese Pistache

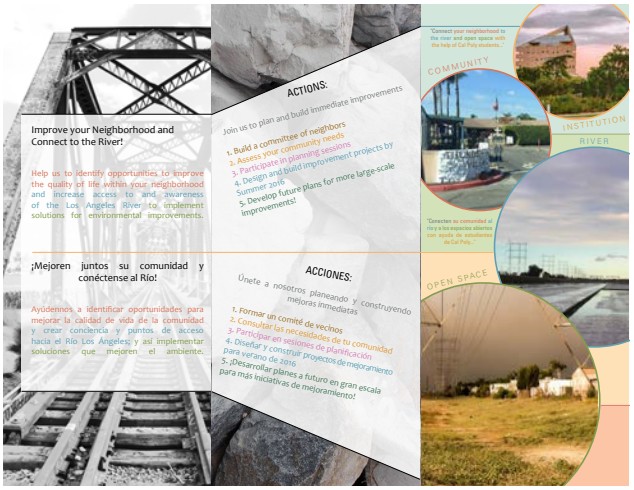

Vines/Vides
Bougainvillea
Violet Trumpet Vine
Cup of Gold Vine
Carolina Jessamine
Evergreen Clematis
Orange Clock Vine

Trees/Arboles
Strawberry Tree
Cercis Forest Pansy
Coral Bells
Crape Myrtle
Chinese Pistache
Catlina Cherry

Trees/Arboles
Pink Trumpet Tree

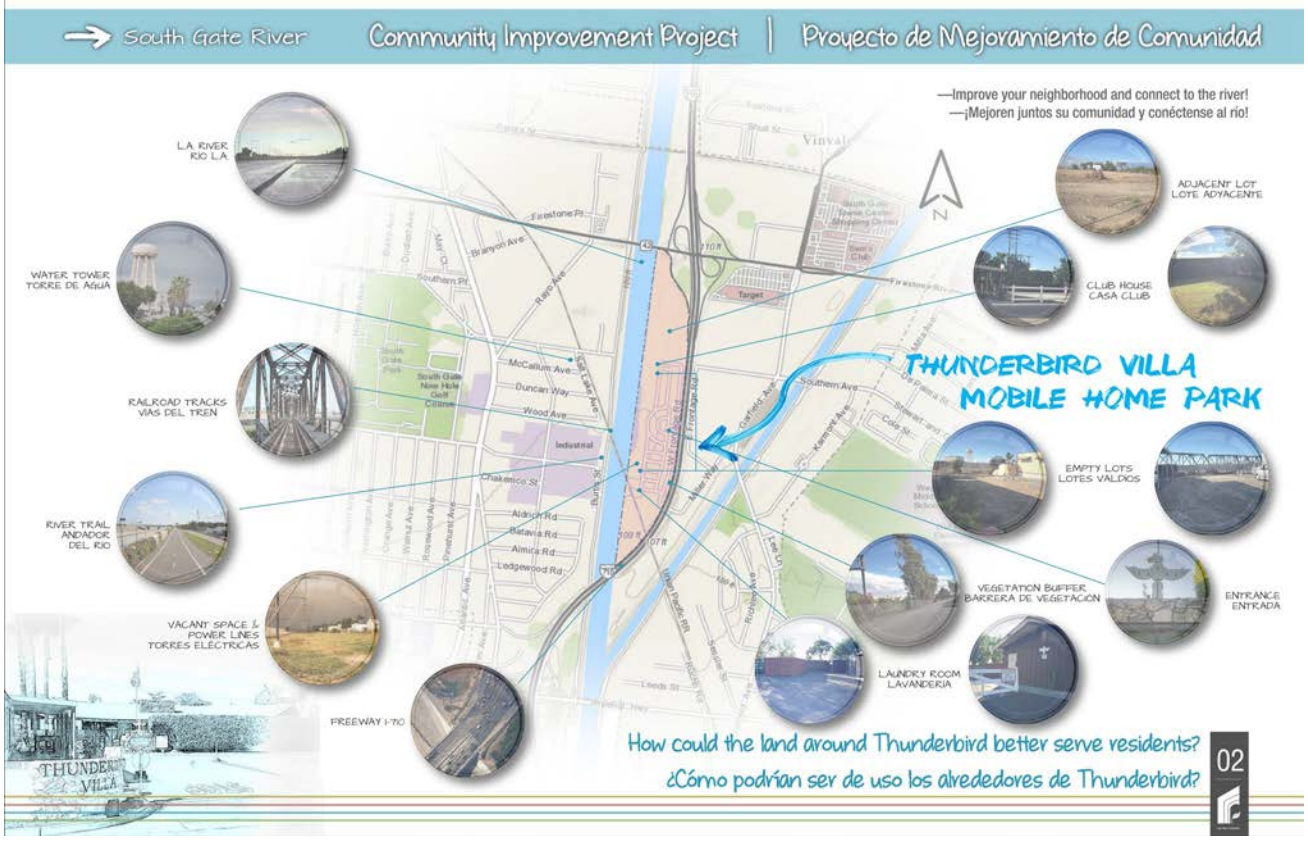
TEAM SOUTH GATE

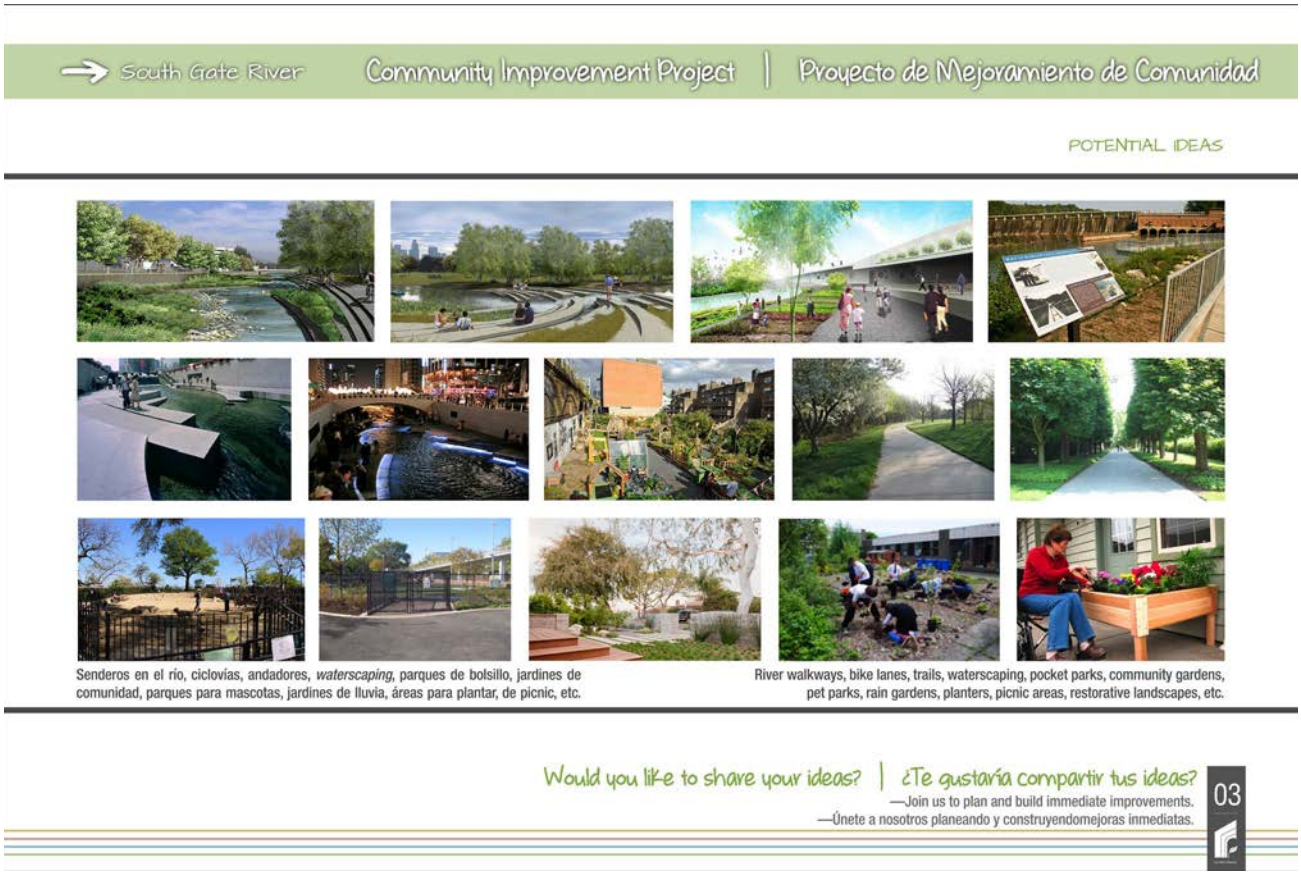
Appendix D.1 | Canvassing Bilingual Flyer



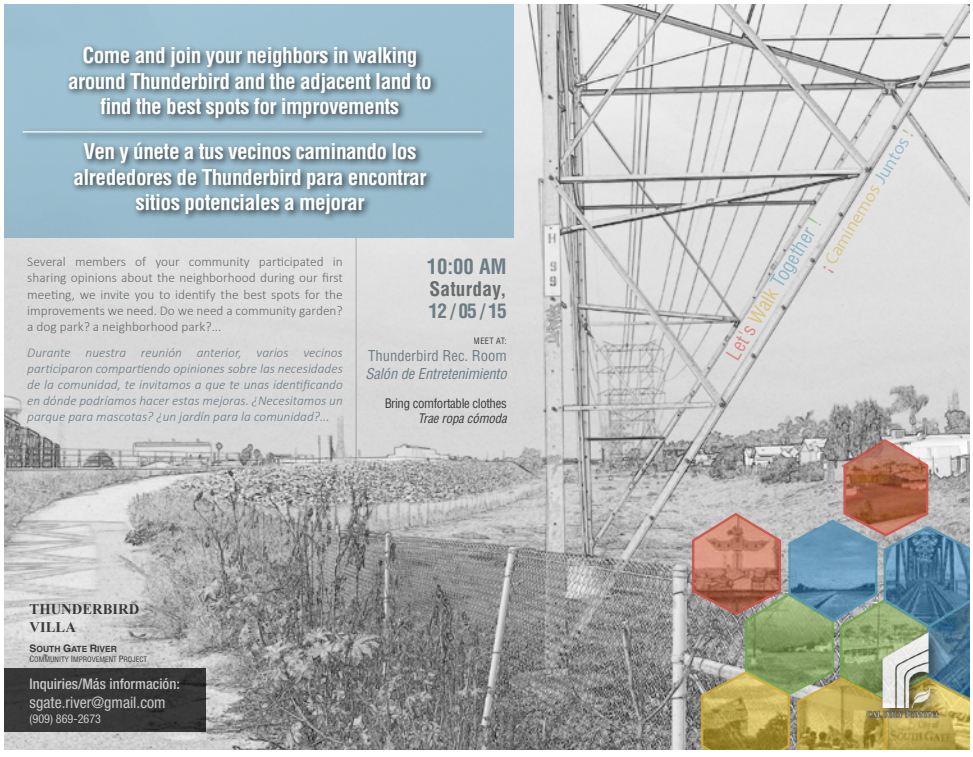
Appendix D.2 | Informational Meeting Bilingual Flyer

South Gate River
Community Improvement Project | Proyecto de Mejoramiento de Comunidad
About Us
Sobre Nosotros
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
College of Environmental Design
Department of Landscape Architecture
606 DESIGN STUDIO
Sara A. Yazdi
Kasandra M. Di Pieri
Matthew L. Wild
Cristhian S. Barajas
Lee-Anne S. Milburn
Steve R. Cancian
Carlos Flores
How would you improve your neighborhood? | ¿Cómo mejorarías tu comunidad?
—We are Cal Poly Pomona graduate students looking forward to working with you to improve this community.
—Somos estudiantes de posgrado en Cal Poly Pomona deseosos de trabajar contigo mejorando tu comunidad.
01


South Gate River
Community Improvement Project | Proyecto de Mejoramiento de Comunidad
—Improve your neighborhood and connect to the river!
—¡Mejoren juntos su comunidad y conéctense al río!
LA RIVER
RIO LA
WATER TOWER
TORRE DE AGUA
RAILROAD TRACKS
VIAS DEL TREN
RIVER TRAIL
ANDADOR
DEL RIO
VACANT SPACE &
POWER LINES
TORRES ELECTRICAS
FREEWAY I-710
ADJACENT LOT
LOTE ADYACENTE
CLUB HOUSE
CASA CLUB
THUNDERBIRD VILLA
MOBILE HOME PARK
EMPTY LOTS
LOTES VALDIOS
VEGETATION BUFFER
BARRERA DE VEGETACION
ENTRANCE
ENTRADA
LAUNDRY ROOM
LAVANDERIA
How could the land around Thunderbird better serve residents?
¿Cómo podrían ser de uso los alrededores de Thunderbird?
02



Appendix D.4 | Site Walk Bilingual Flyer



APPENDIX D

FRONTAGE ROAD

NORTH HALL

NORTH LOT

THUNDERBIRD STREETS

POWER LINES

Appendix D.6 | Site Selection Meeting Bilingual Invitation Letter

Querido Residente de Thunderbird:

Dear Thunderbird Resident:

Queremos comunicarle con alegría que, como se habrá podido dar cuenta, estudiantes de posgrado, integrantes del Equipo de Diseño de Paisaje de Cal Poly Pomona, están trabajando en conjunto con los residentes de Thunderbird en un proyecto de comunidad.

Durante los últimos dos meses, hemos estado visitando su comunidad y tenido hasta el momento tres reuniones con los residentes; incluso tuvimos un tour guiado, que quizá tuvo usted la oportunidad de presenciar mientras caminábamos por las calles.

ESPAÑOL

Le invitamos este próximo Sábado 16 de Enero, a las 10:30 a.m. a nuestra Reunión de Selección de Sitio para el Proyecto de Mejoramiento de Comunidad, y elegir qué sitio vamos a estar trabajando. Se llevará a cabo en la Sala de Recreación de Thunderbird. Ven y decide junto a nosotros las metas y qué sitio vamos a construir. ¡No se pierda esta oportunidad! Esperamos verle pronto y por favor no dude en contactarnos para más información.

We would like to communicate you with joy that, as you may have noticed, graduate students from the Cal Poly Pomona Landscape Design Studio are working along with Thunderbird residents in a community project.

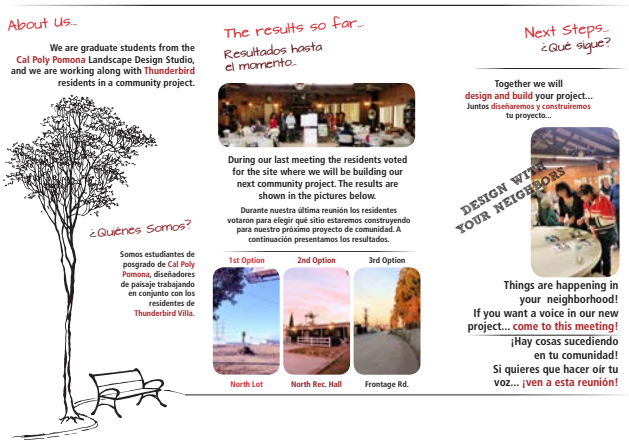
For over the last two months we have been visiting your neighborhood, and had 3 meetings with members of the community; we even had a tour together, as you may have seen us walking out there.

ENGLISH

This coming Saturday 16th of January, at 10:30 a.m. you are invited to our Community Improvement Project Site Selection Meeting, for choosing the goals and the project site. It will be held at the Thunderbird Recreation Room. Don't miss your chance of being part of our exciting project to help the community. Come and decide which site we are going to build! We hope to see you around, please don't hesitate and ask for more information.

— THE 606 DESIGN STUDIO

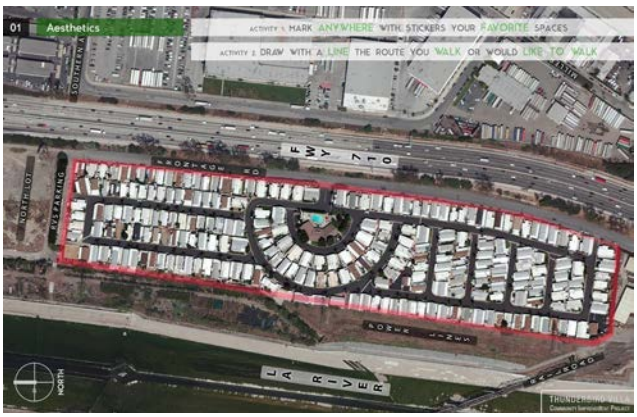
Appendix D.7 | Design Workshop One Bilingual Flyer



Appendix D.8 | Design Workshop One Site Inventory Analysis Mapping Exercise

Appendix D.9 | Design Workshop Two Bilingual Flyer

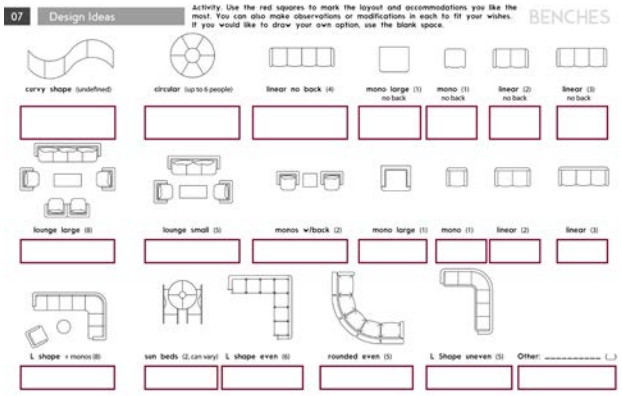
Appendix D.10 | Design Workshop Two Material Detial Booklet

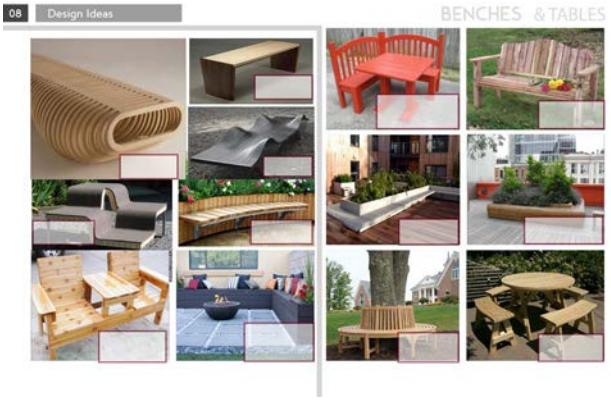


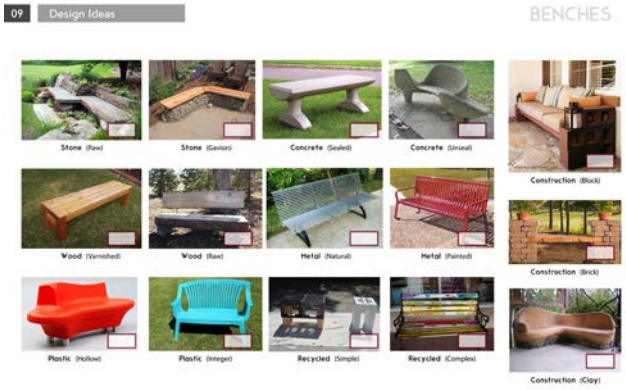
04 Conceptual Design
NORTH REC. HALL
EXAMPLE 2
OBSERVATIONS:
BANDINI CHANNEL
(POWER LINES & LA RIVER)
fence
pet area
waste bag dispenser
benches, planters and garden area
VACANT LOT
exercise equipment
potted trees
raised planters and benches
green wall
THUNDERBIRD VILLA
(REC HALL BUILDING)
(REC HALL PARKING)
(CAR WASH AREA)
NORTH

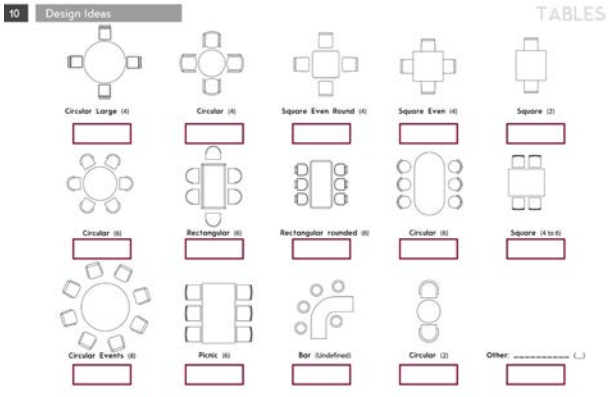
05 Conceptual Design
NORTH REC. HALL
EXAMPLE 3
OBSERVATIONS:
BANDINI CHANNEL
(POWER LINES & LA RIVER)
fence
pet area
waste bag dispenser
benches, planters and garden area
VACANT LOT
exercise equipment
potted trees
raised planters and benches
green wall
THUNDERBIRD VILLA
(REC HALL BUILDING)
(REC HALL PARKING)
(CAR WASH AREA)
NORTH

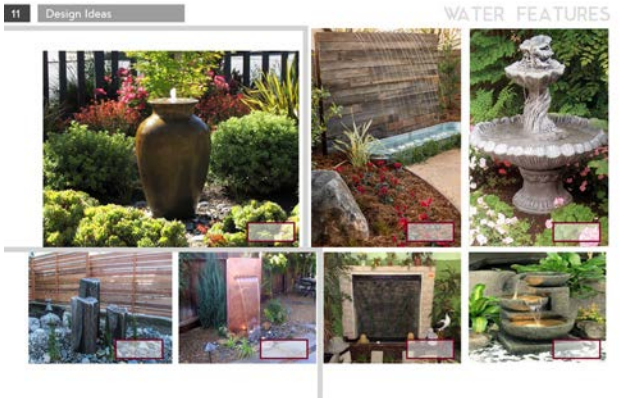
06 Design Ideas
BENCHES

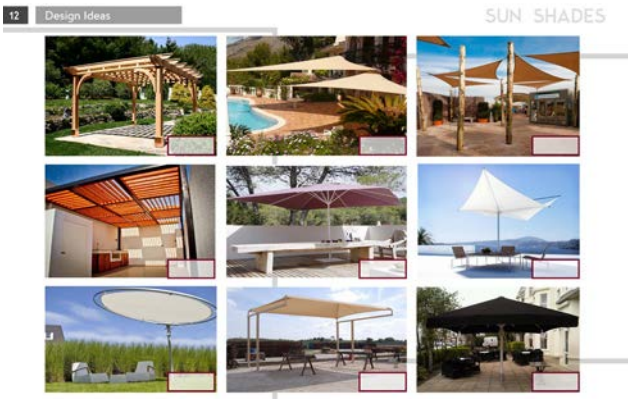

07 Design Ideas
Activity. Use the red squares to mark the layout and accommodations you like the most. You can also make observations or modifications in each to fit your wishes. If you would like to draw your own option, use the blank space.
BENCHES
curvy shape (undefined)
circular (up to 6 people)
linear no back (4)
mono large (1) no back
mono (1) no back
linear (2) no back
linear (3) no back
lounge large (8)
lounge small (5)
monos w/back (2)
mono large (1)
mono (1)
linear (2)
linear (3)
L shape + monos (8)
son beds (2, can vary)
L shape even (6)
rounded even (5)
L Shape uneven (5)
Other: _____ (_)

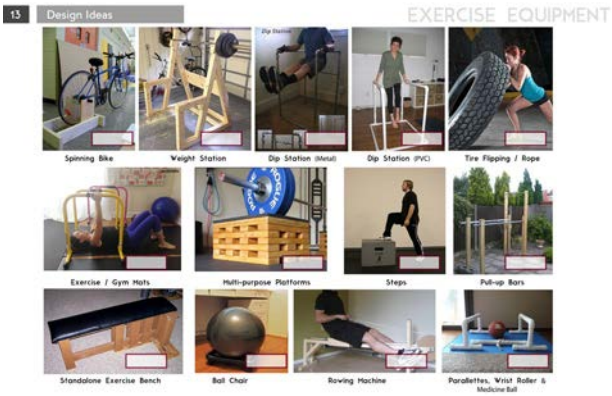

08 Design Ideas
BENCHES & TABLES

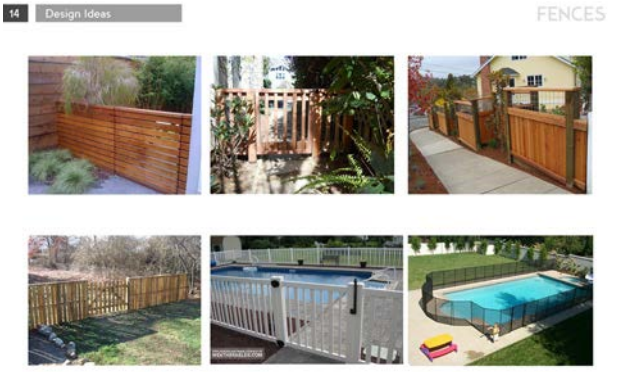

09 Design Ideas
BENCHES
Stone (Raw)
Stone (Gavion)
Concrete (Sealed)
Concrete (Unseal)
Construction (Block)
Wood (Varnished)
Wood (Raw)
Metal (Natural)
Metal (Painted)
Construction (Brick)
Plastic (Hollow)
Plastic (Integer)
Recycled (Simple)
Recycled (Complex)
Construction (Clay)

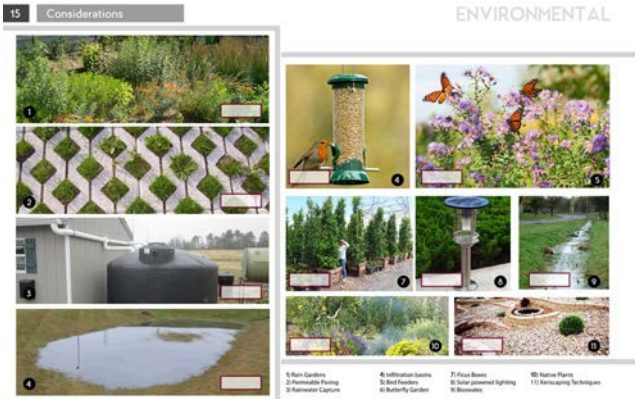

10 Design Ideas
TABLES
Circular Large (4)
Circular (4)
Square Even Round (4)
Square Even (4)
Square (2)
Circular (6)
Rectangular (6)
Rectangular rounded (6)
Circular (8)
Square (4 to 6)
Circular Events (8)
Picnic (6)
Bar (Undefined)
Circular (2)
Other: _____ (_)


11 Design Ideas
WATER FEATURES





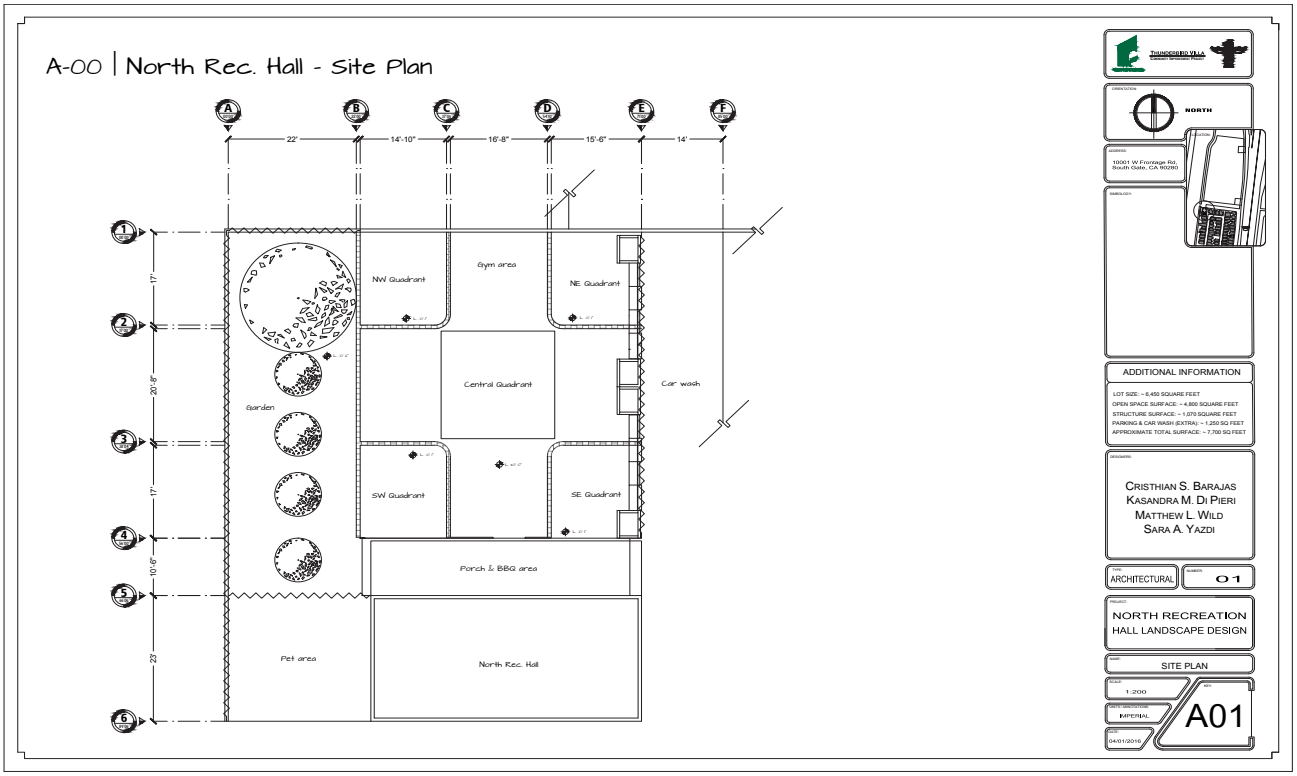




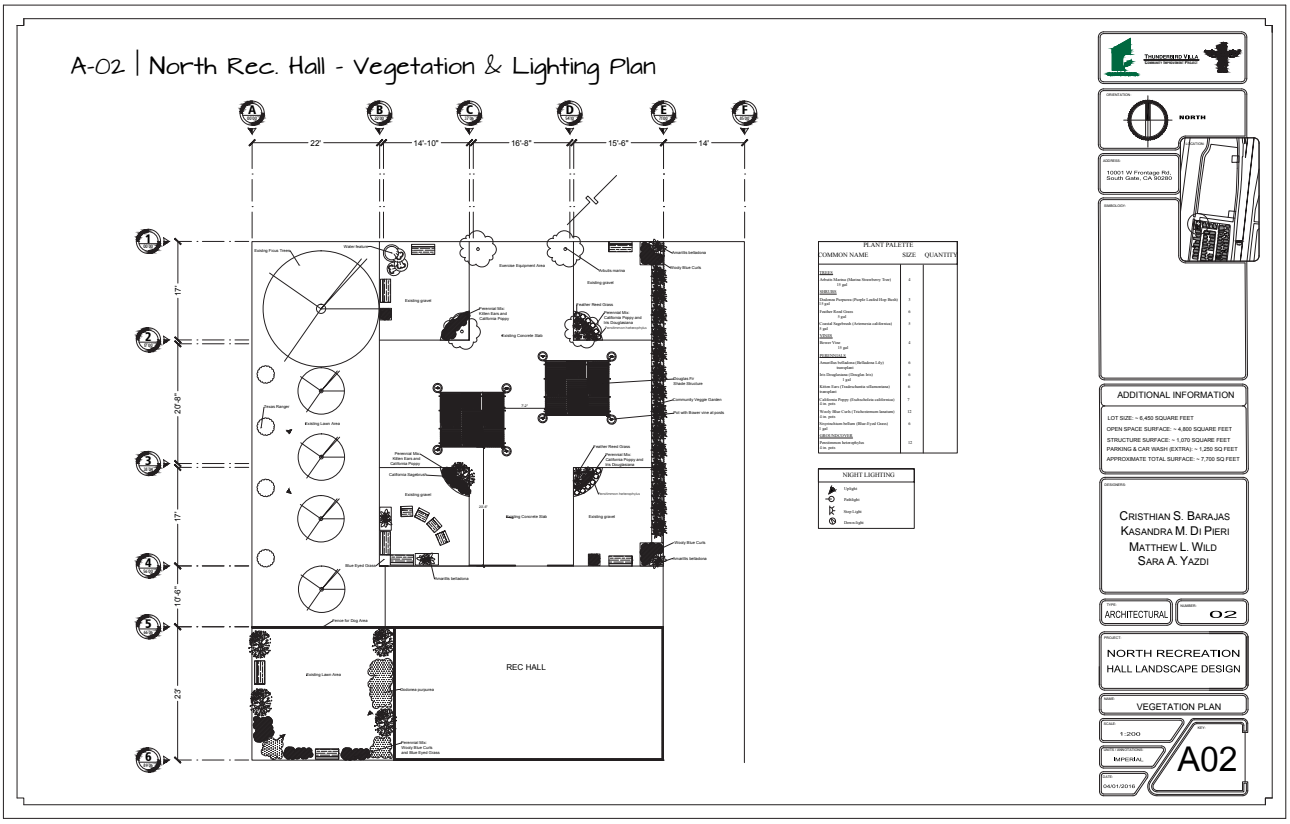
APPENDIX D

Appendix D.11 | Design Workshop Three Bilingual Flyer

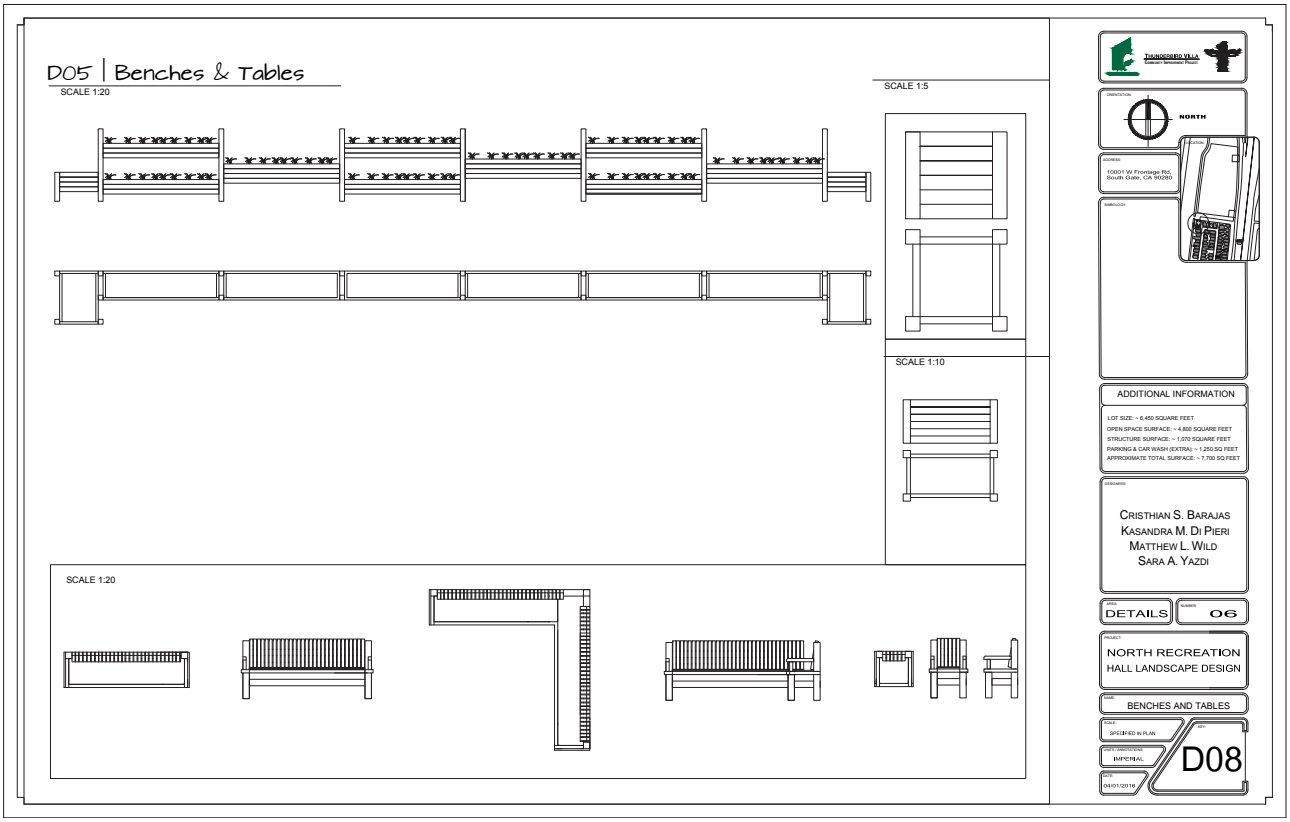
Appendix D.12 | North Rec. Hall Site Plan Construction Document



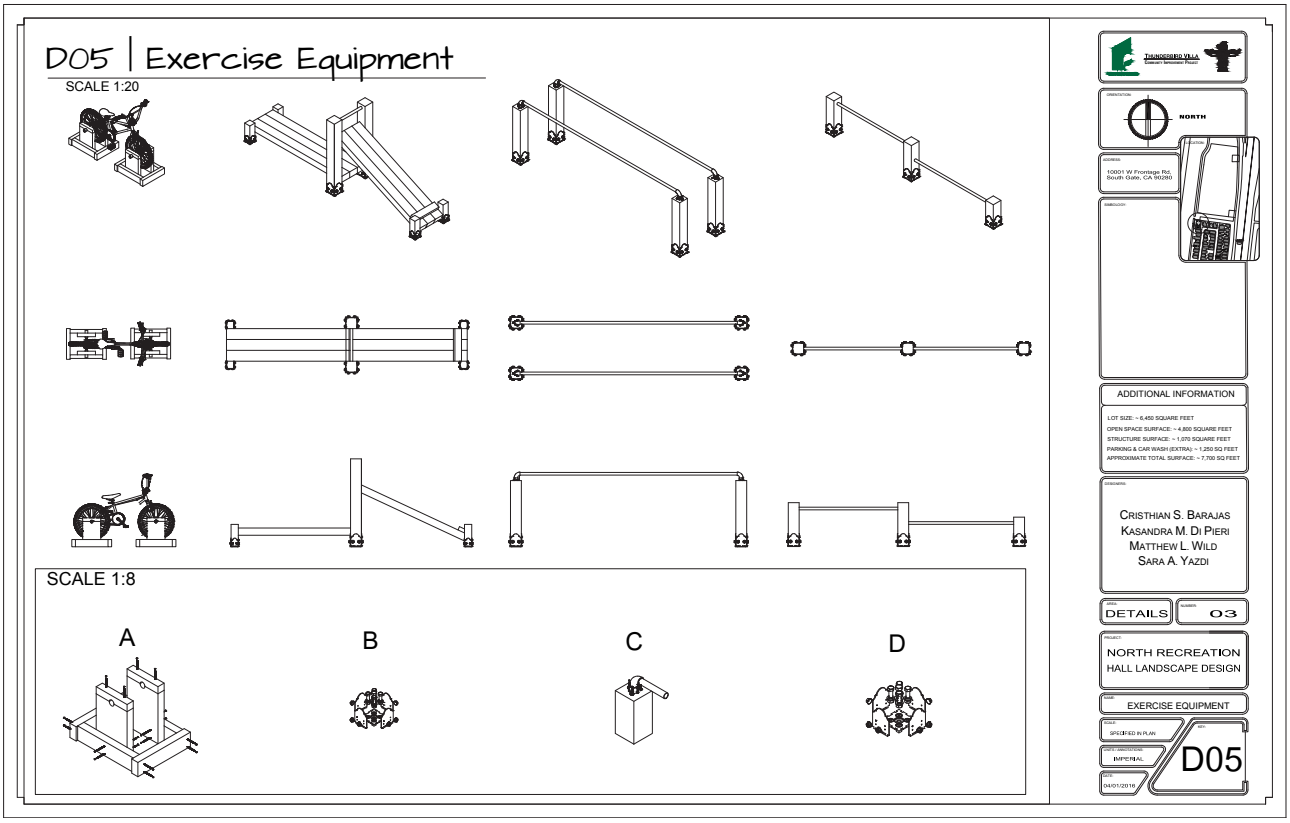
Appendix D.13 | North Rec. Hall Vegetation & Lighting Plan Construction Document



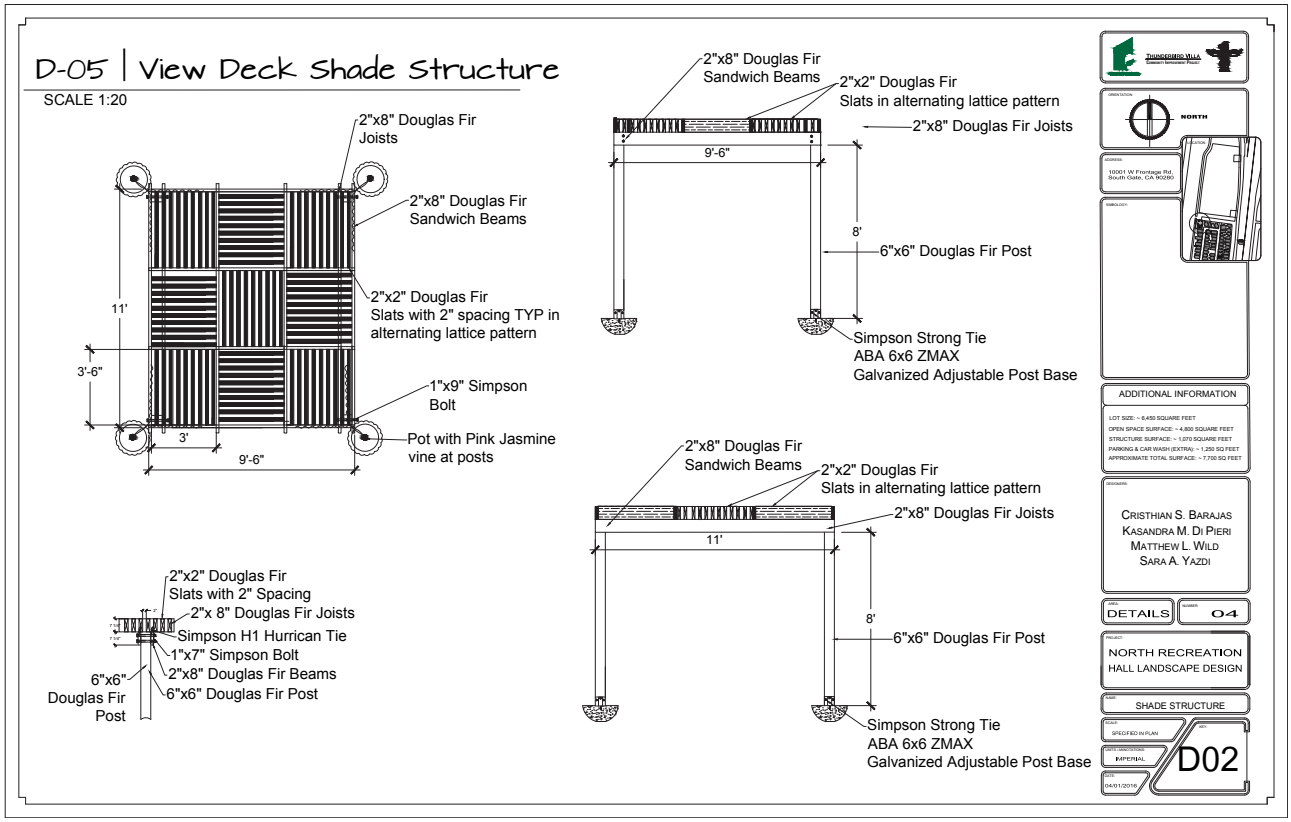
Appendix D.14 | Benches & Tables Construction Document



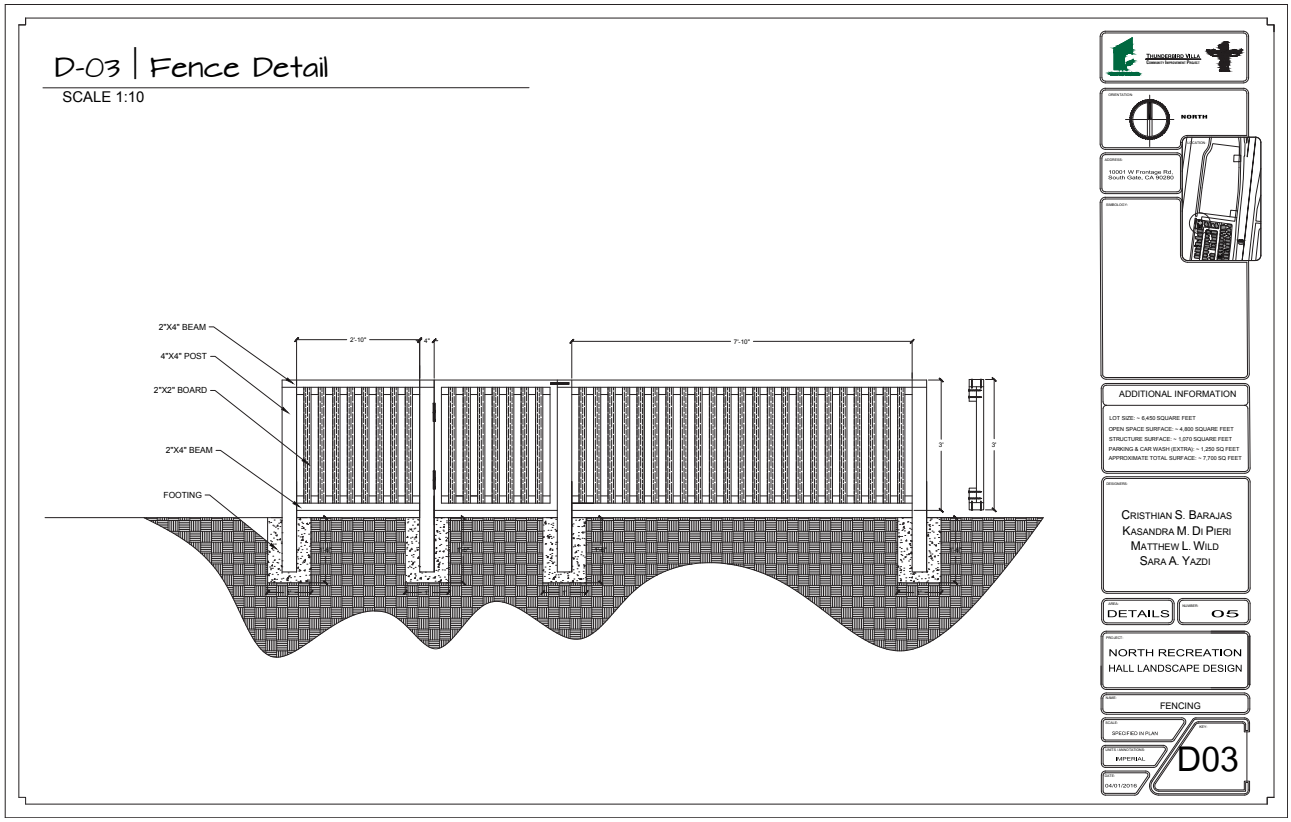
Appendix D.15 | Exercise Equipment Construction Document



Appendix D.16 | View Deck Shade Structure Construction Document



Appendix D.17 | Fence Detail Construction Document



Appendix D.18 | Design Workshop Four Bilingual Flyer

Appendix D.19 | Construction Flyer One

Do you like to build?
We need your help!
Come join us for the
2nd COMMUNITY BUILD DAY
Saturday May 7, 2016
at 9:30 a.m.
at the North Rec Hall

We are bringing your design ideas to life, but now we need your help to build/assemble outdoor furniture and put the finishing touches!
Bring comfortable clothing and protective shoes

Appendix D.20 | Construction Flyer Two

Do you like to build?
We need your help!
Come join us for the
3rd COMMUNITY BUILD DAY
Saturday May 14, and Sunday May 15, 2016
at 9:30 a.m.
at the North Rec Hall

We are bringing your design ideas to life, but now we need your help to build/assemble outdoor furniture and put the finishing touches!
Bring comfortable clothing and protective shoes

Appendix D.21 | Long-Term Project Presentation Boards

South Gate River
Community Improvement Project

Proyecto de Mejoramiento de Comunidad
South Gate River

Prepared for:

TRAILS4ALL
Sharing the Responsibility

Jim Meyer, Executive Director
May 04, 2016

Cristhian Barajas | Kasandra Di Pieri | Matthew Wild | Sara Yazdi

Contact Information:
kasandra.dipieri@yahoo.com
(562) 745-8922

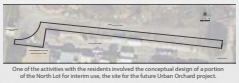
About the Project...

The South Gate River Community Improvement Project aims to create new recreational facilities and connection opportunities to the L.A. River for the residents adjacent to west of the South Gate Triangle District. In the past seven months, graduate design students from the California State Polytechnic University of Pomona have met with community members of the Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park, one of the main residential settlements in this area.

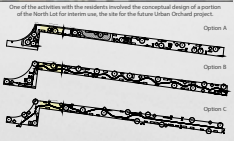
As a result of a series of meetings, community site analyses and design workshops, the students along with the residents designed a landscape project inside the Villa. The project is currently under construction as the product of participatory design efforts.

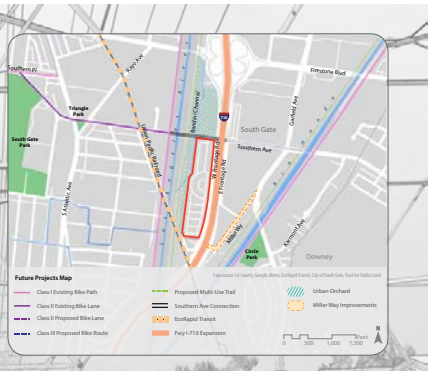
The second phase of the project contemplates the development of a vision plan in the surroundings of the neighborhood that could potentially be implemented in a near future, either as an interim-use project, or as a permanent one. The main goal is to incorporate the motivations, ideas and concerns of the community into this new plan. The surroundings of Thunderbird Villa are the target of many projects that aim for the improvement of transportation and the creation of new open spaces (See Future Projects Map).

During our initial meetings with the community, the team considered it crucial to inform them about these projects. The hope is that the necessities and the desires of the community can be addressed and portrayed in the upcoming plans by sharing information and creating a conceptual plan in partnership with the involved or interested agencies. The community has expressed interest in walking/biking lanes within the park and along Frontage Road, as well as trails and a recreation area in the North Lot. Three related yet distinct design options will be presented for the involved agency to carry forward to seek funding for after the design team graduates.



One of the activities with the residents involved the conceptual design of a portion of the North Lot for interim use, the site for the future Urban Orchard project.





SOUTH GATE RIVER
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

PROYECTO DE MEJORAMIENTO DE COMUNIDAD
SOUTH GATE RIVER

Prepared for:

May 04, 2016

Cristhian Barajas | Kasandra Di Pieri | Matthew Wild | Sara Yazdi

Contact Information:
Sarayazdi@yahoo.com
(415) 789-0033

About the Project...

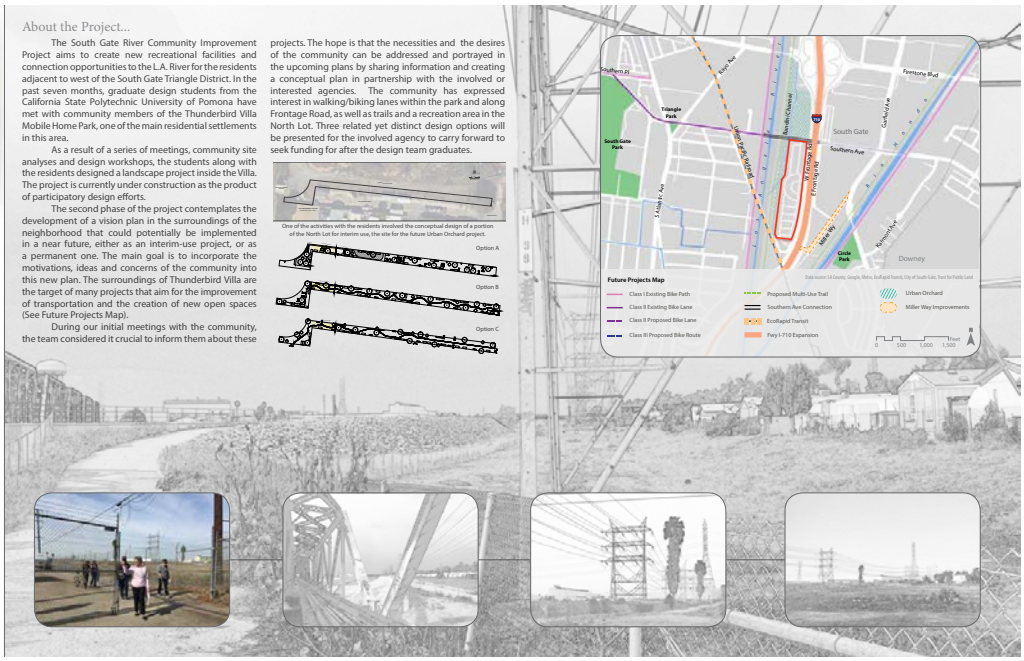
The South Gate River Community Improvement Project aims to create new recreational facilities and connection opportunities to the L.A. River for the residents adjacent to west of the South Gate Triangle District. In the past seven months, graduate design students from the California State Polytechnic University of Pomona have met with community members of the Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park, one of the main residential settlements in this area.

As a result of a series of meetings, community site analyses and design workshops, the students along with the residents designed a landscape project inside the Villa. The project is currently under construction as the product of participatory design efforts.

The second phase of the project contemplates the development of a vision plan in the surroundings of the neighborhood that could potentially be implemented in a near future, either as an interim-use project, or as a permanent one. The main goal is to incorporate the motivations, ideas and concerns of the community into this new plan. The surroundings of Thunderbird Villa are the target of many projects that aim for the improvement of transportation and the creation of new open spaces (See Future Projects Map).

During our initial meetings with the community, the team considered it crucial to inform them about these projects. The hope is that the necessities and the desires of the community can be addressed and portrayed in the upcoming plans by sharing information and creating a conceptual plan in partnership with the involved or interested agencies. The community has expressed interest in walking/biking lanes within the park and along Frontage Road, as well as trails and a recreation area in the North Lot. Three related yet distinct design options will be presented for the involved agency to carry forward to seek funding for after the design team graduates.

One of the activities with the residents involved the conceptual design of a portion of the North Lot for interim use, the site for the future Urban Orchard project.



APPENDIX D

SOUTH GATE RIVER
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

PROYECTO DE MEJORAMIENTO DE COMUNIDAD
SOUTH GATE RIVER

Prepared for:

THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND

May 02, 2016

Cristhian Barajas | Kasandra Di Pieri | Matthew Wild | Sara Yazdi

Contact Information:
csbp3@hotmail.com
(909) 576-0759

About the Project...

The South Gate River Community Improvement Project aims to create new recreational facilities and connection opportunities to the L.A. River for the residents adjacent to west of the South Gate Triangle District. In the past seven months, graduate design students from the California State Polytechnic University of Pomona have met with community members of the Thunderbird Villa Mobile Home Park, one of the main residential settlements in this area.

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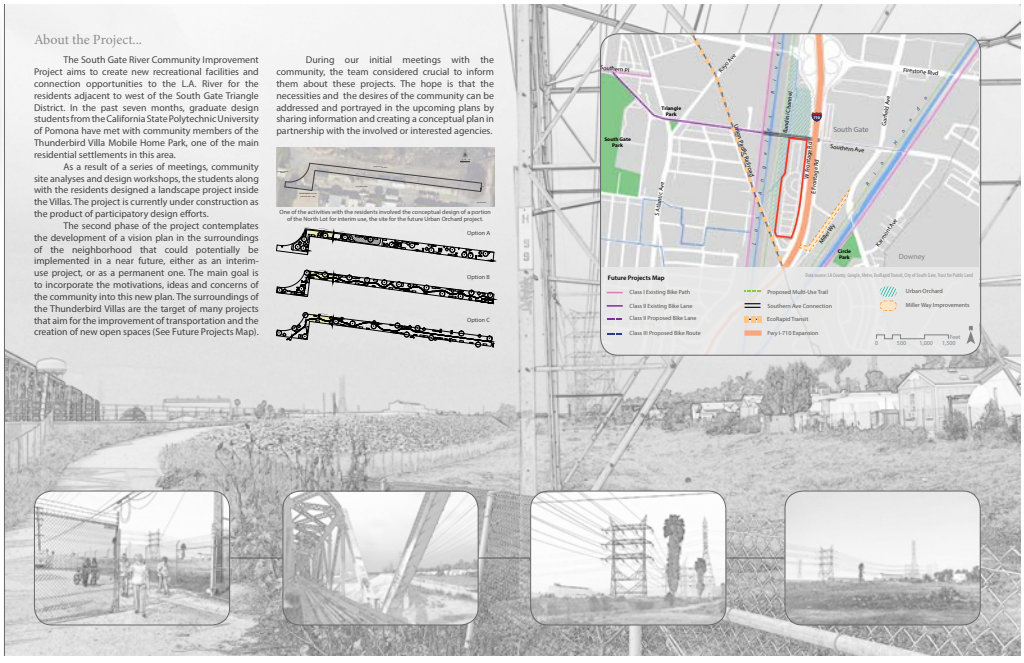
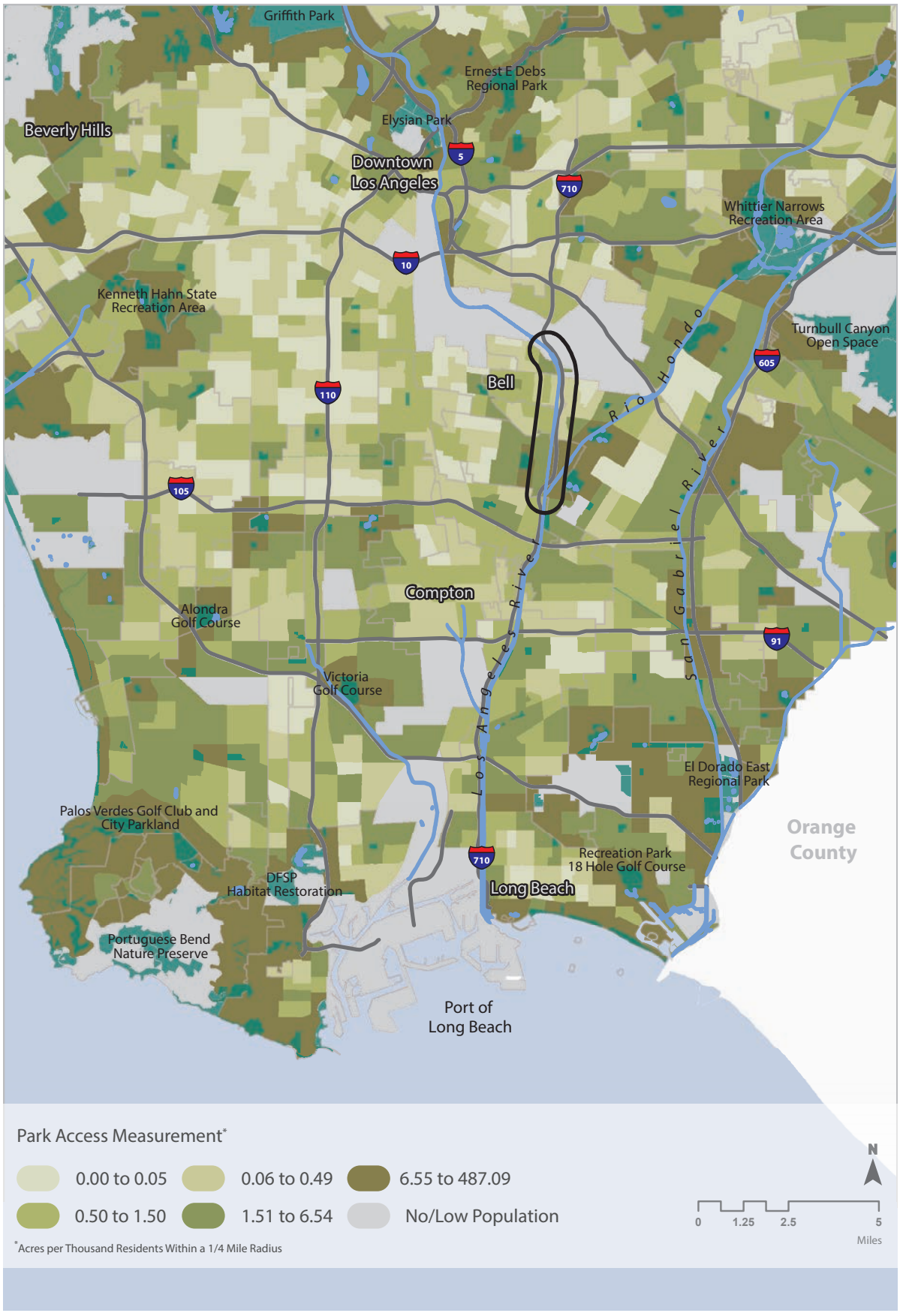
One of the activities with the residents involved the conceptual design of a portion of the North Lot for interim use, the site for the future Urban Orchard project.



SUMMARY OF PARK ACCESS MAP METHODOLOGY



1) A ¼ mile park buffer layer was created from California Protected Areas Database data

2) 2010 census block data was converted to point form based on block centroids

3) The census block point layer was joined to the park buffer layer, retaining the population for each park buffer polygon as the sum of the census block centroid points found within its boundaries, providing the population living within a ¼ mile service area of each park

4) The GIS acreage of each park buffer polygon was divided by the population and multiplied by 1,000, to provide the park acreage per 1,000 residents

5) As the primary unit of mapping analysis in the Region chapter is the census tract, this polygon data was then converted to point form and joined to a census tract polygon layer

This project focuses on a portion of the lower Los Angeles River that until now has received little attention, has limited accessible parks and open spaces, is highly dense, and whose residents are predominantly Latino and low income.

Students from the 606 Studio at Cal Poly Pomona collaborated with local community members to design and build neighborhood improvement projects. Through participatory design, the 606 team was able to build a small urban plaza in the empty space next to a butcher shop, create a community gathering space in a trailer park, and paint four street murals. These projects demonstrate a low budget, alternative way to begin improving river adjacent communities, setting a foundation for these communities and their residents to influence, shape, and design larger future improvements along the LA River.