



# San Lorenzo Park Conceptual Redesign

Final Report

May 2025





Parks and Recreation  
City of Santa Cruz

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**Acknowledgments:**

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the community members and organizations that contributed their valuable insights, ideas, and feedback throughout the community outreach process. Your participation has been instrumental in shaping the recommendations in this plan to address the diverse needs of our community. We eagerly anticipate continuing our conversations as we look to the future in turning these redesign concepts into meaningful park improvement projects.

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# Introduction

The City of Santa Cruz Parks & Recreation Department staff, with the design team, conducted the San Lorenzo Park conceptual redesign effort from December 2022 - October 2024. The purpose of the conceptual redesign effort was to evaluate existing conditions; analyze site constraints, opportunities, physical attributes, and context; facilitate outreach to understand community needs and desires; and create a conceptual master planning document including conceptual renderings and narrative to guide the uses, design, activities, and future development within the park. The Parks & Recreation Department staff and the design team conducted the conceptual redesign effort in three stages.

Stage 1 consisted of research of existing conditions and observations, and community engagement to inform a needs assessment. The needs assessment identified the unique opportunities, guiding principles, design goals, and potential programs for the park that served as a guide for the redesign effort.

Stage 2 consisted of drafting options for the park and developing the redesign direction, as well as community engagement to refine the concepts.

Stage 3 consisted of further refining the concepts and completing the final report.

This report summarizes the process and describes in detail the vision and concepts for San Lorenzo Park. This document will serve as a feasibility study to inform possible future uses, design, activities, permitting, and development. Additional studies and analysis are necessary to further refine the concepts. See the Needs Assessment and supporting documents for more background information on the process.



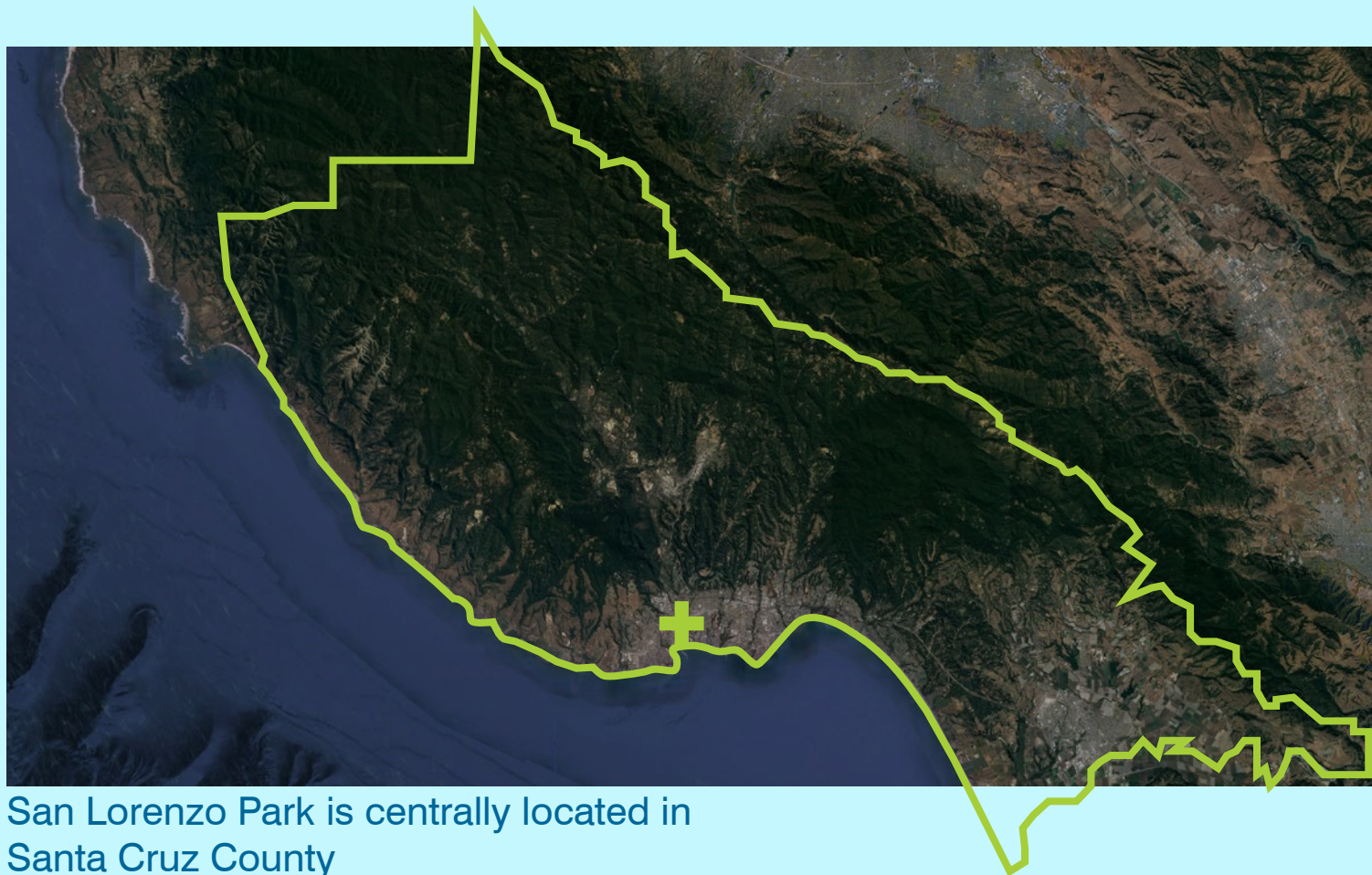


# Context

Located at the heart of the city and county of Santa Cruz, San Lorenzo Park is a cherished but outdated park with unique potential to be transformative for Santa Cruz and its communities. The park is situated along the San Lorenzo River directly across from downtown and along the Santa Cruz Riverwalk. It is centrally located within both the county and city. Per the City's 2030 General Plan, it is a community park and is intended to be designed to serve the entire community and offer unique facilities.



San Lorenzo Park serves surrounding neighborhoods and is a downtown park



San Lorenzo Park is centrally located in Santa Cruz County



San Lorenzo Park serves the City of Santa Cruz



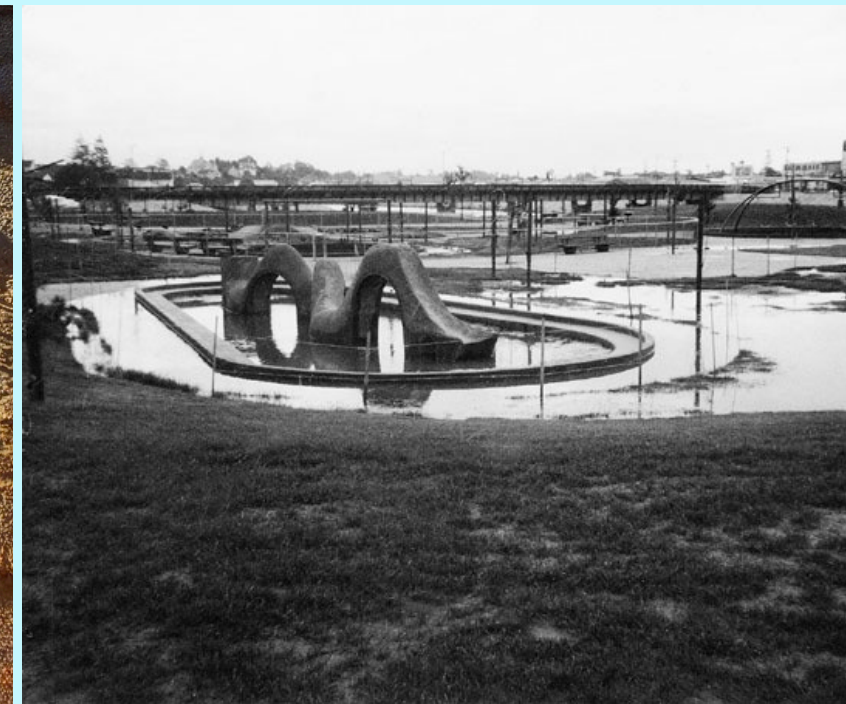
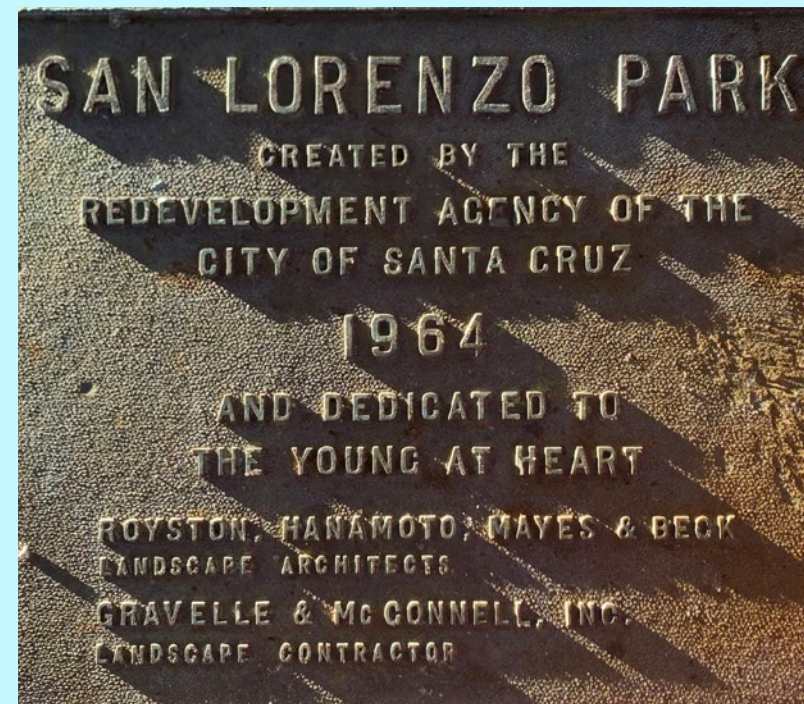
# Park Transformation

San Lorenzo Park has been an important site in Santa Cruz's history. The park has held significant meaning to many people and cultures throughout history and it has served the city in profound ways during times of crisis. Santa Cruz was a significant site for indigenous villages of the Awaswas-speaking Uypi tribe that may have been located at or near the present-day San Lorenzo Park.\*

Over time, San Lorenzo park became part of the growing and urbanizing city. Following the devastating 1955 flood, San Lorenzo Park was transformed into its current open space configuration as part of the San Lorenzo River flood-control project and the redevelopment of a large portion of the downtown area.

Since its opening, San Lorenzo Park has hosted memorable events, spaces for families and the community to enjoy, and recreational opportunities. The riverlands (formerly referred to as "the benchlands")\*\* were transformed during the COVID pandemic into sanctioned and unsanctioned encampments. In 2022, the city returned the riverlands to a vacant open space and began a process of restoration.

Images (clockwise): 1. Depiction of one of the indigenous peoples from the Monterey Bay area region, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band (Source: <https://www.amahmutsunlandtrust.org/the-tribal-band>), 2. Plaque in park, 3. Serpent play structure at San Lorenzo Park, approx. 1964, 4. Santa Cruz flooded in 1955 flood, 5. Encampment in the riverlands during COVID pandemic, May 2022.







Today, the City of Santa Cruz continues to evolve and the downtown is experiencing substantial growth that will increase the need for public open space near downtown. Located directly adjacent to downtown and along the riverwalk, a redesigned San Lorenzo Park could provide much needed open space and improved connectivity for the growing Santa Cruz population.

The park should honor and remember the park's storied history, while also offering new park amenities and uses for the park's diverse population of users including the growing downtown population. It could serve as a downtown park and it should be forward thinking as a downtown park to provide uses and open space for many future generations.

\* <https://coastal-watershed.org/the-meaning-of-aulintak/>  
 Rizzo, M. A. (2016). No Somos Animales: Indigenous Survival and Perseverance in 19th Century Santa Cruz, California. UC Santa Cruz. Doctoral Dissertation,  
[http://www.protectjuristac.org/2020minilessons/Michelle Lorimer & Shelley Brooks, \(2019\).](http://www.protectjuristac.org/2020minilessons/Michelle%20Lorimer%20&%20Shelley%20Brooks,%20(2019).%20Missions'%20impact%20on%20environment%20and%20economy.%20Teaching%20California%20Curriculum%20Inquiry.)  
 Missions' impact on environment and economy. Teaching California Curriculum Inquiry.

\*\*This report will refer to the benchlands as the riverlands, and the upland as the uplands.





Existing site aerial



# Existing Conditions & Observations



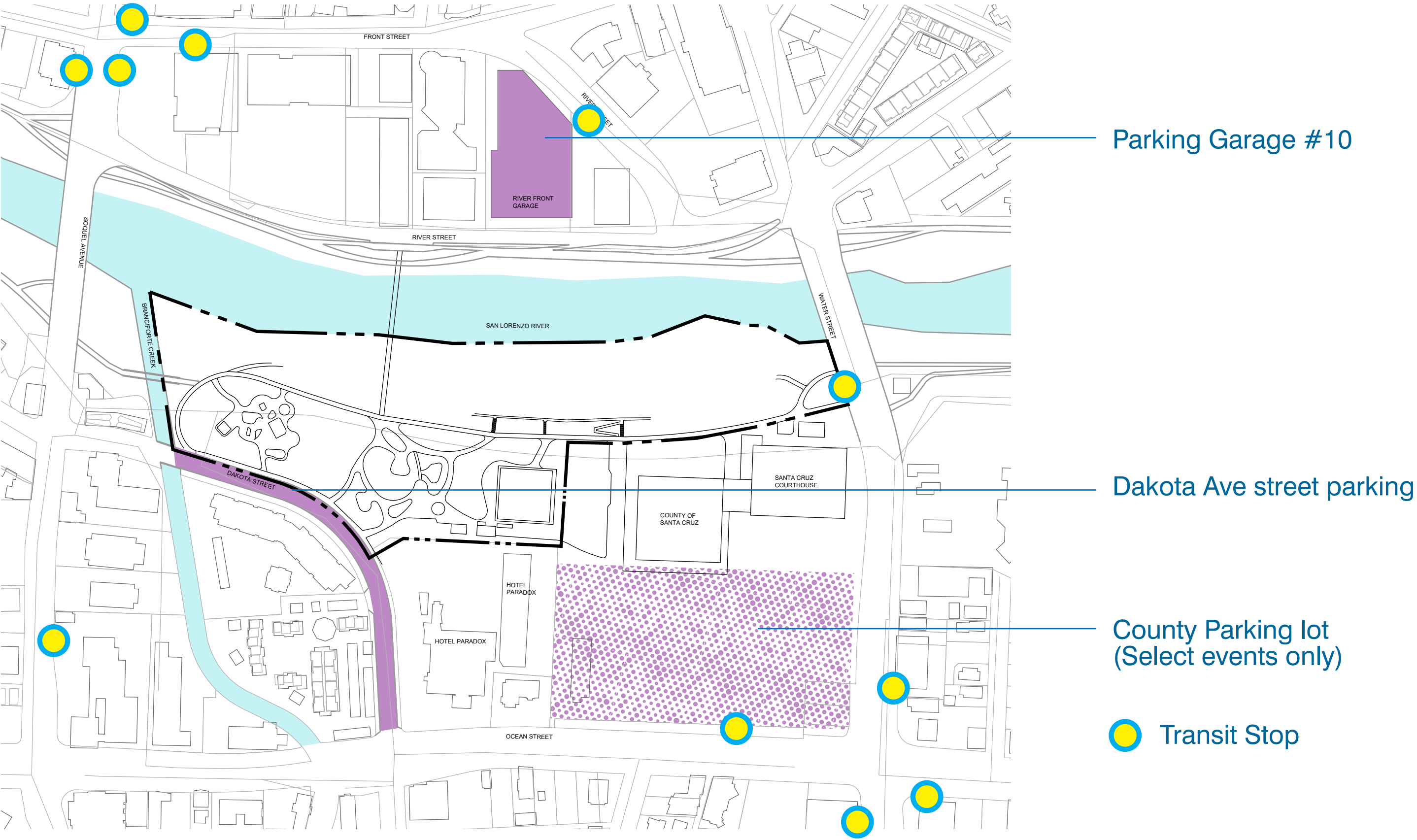
# Access & Connections

There are many ways to access the park today by foot, bicycle, bus, and car. Access to the park from downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, however, is unclear, hidden, and disconnected in locations. This presents opportunities to better connect the park, create more visibility for accessing the park, and more prominent and safe entry points.





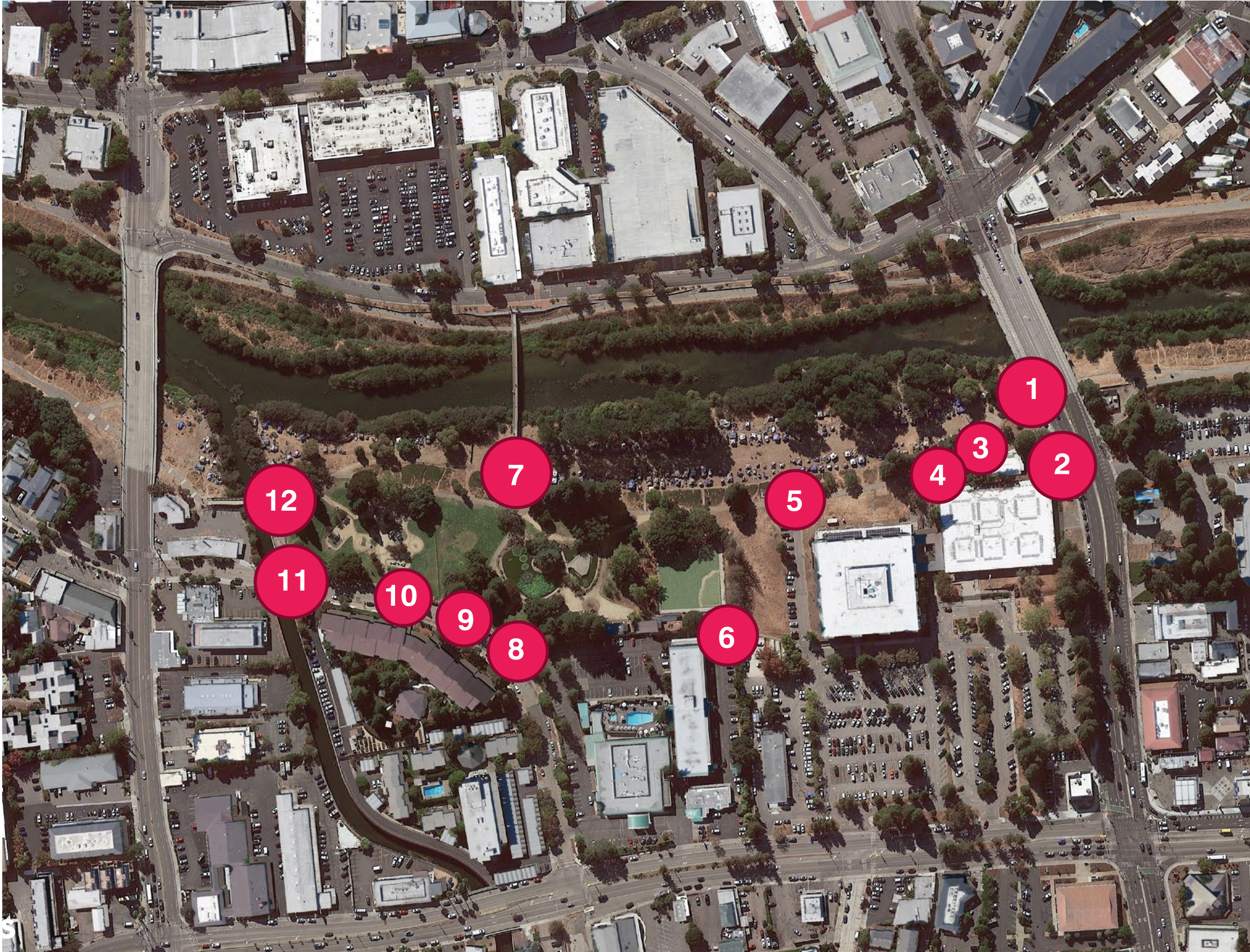
# Transit & Parking





# Current Park Entries

The park currently has many entries. Some are hidden, hard to find, unclear, and some community members feel unsafe.





# Current Park Entries





# Park History

San Lorenzo Park is the largest park in downtown Santa Cruz, directly adjacent to the San Lorenzo River and diverse riverside neighborhoods. The park was created in the redevelopment project following the catastrophic 1955 flood. One of its attractions since 1964 has been “Lorenzo” the sea serpent in the play area.



San Lorenzo River at San Lorenzo Park  
Resource: Santa Cruz Public Libraries Local History



Serpent play structure at San Lorenzo Park  
Resource: Santa Cruz Public Libraries Local History



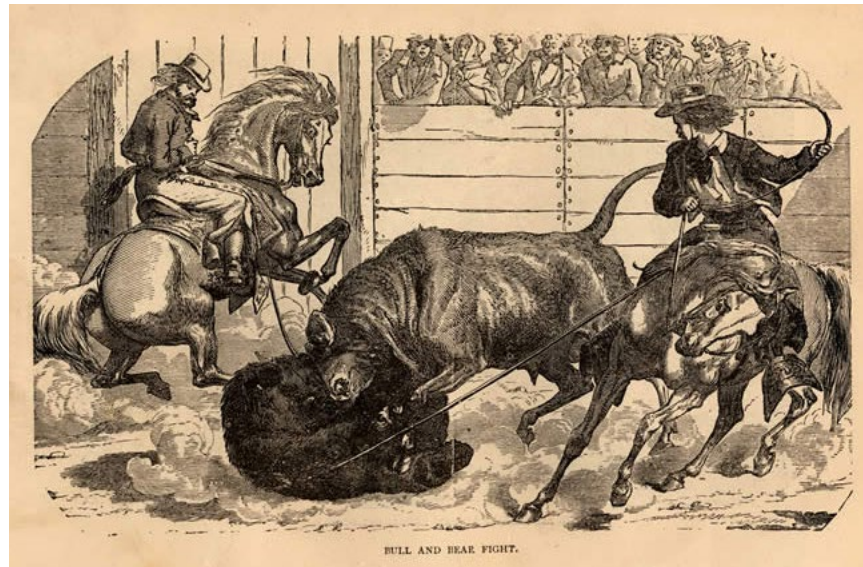
San Lorenzo Park, built 1964



# Historical Events



Resource: <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=100961>, Photographed By Jim Cirner



**Historical Bull and Bear Fights**  
Resource: Library of Congress; Bancroft Library



**The first Venetian Water Carnival, 1895**  
Resource: Santa Cruz Public Libraries Local History



**Central stage for the Water Carnival on the San Lorenzo River, 1890's**  
Resource: Santa Cruz Public Libraries Local History



**Swimming in the San Lorenzo River at Brookdale. Right: Decorated boats and barges in the Water Carnival, 1890's.**  
Resource: Santa Cruz Public Libraries Local History





# Villages Along the River & Indigenous Santa Cruz Peoples

The park and surrounding area may have been a village site of the indigenous Awaswas-speaking Uypi tribe. Sources suggest that Chalumü was an indigenous village of the Awaswas-speaking Uypi tribe located at or near the present-day San Lorenzo Park. Archaeological evidence suggests that the area was inhabited for approximately 2,000 years before Spanish colonization in the late 1700s. For centuries, indigenous peoples tended to the land through restorative practices. The Native American tribal communities are helping restore natural lands in the Monterey Bay area.

**Source:** <https://coastal-watershed.org/the-meaning-of-aulintak/>  
Rizzo, M. A. (2016). No Somos Animales: Indigenous Survival and Perseverance in 19th Century Santa Cruz, California. UC Santa Cruz. Doctoral Dissertation, <http://www.protectjuristac.org/2020minilessons/>  
Michelle Lorimer & Shelley Brooks, (2019). Missions' impact on environment and economy. Teaching California Curriculum Inquiry.







# River Confluence

The confluence of San Lorenzo River and Branciforte Creek on the southwest edge of the park presents a unique opportunity for the park. Confluences often have historical significance. The confluence today is hidden and forgotten.



# Flood Management

The extreme flood events of winter 2023 are a reminder that San Lorenzo Park is connected to a dynamic and regional ecological system much larger than the park itself. Designed to fill up in major storm events, the riverlands have historically flooded and are designed to manage large flood volumes. These dynamics define challenges and opportunities for this low-lying area. At roughly 6.3 acres, or 48.5% of the total park area, the riverlands function differently from the uplands and are restricted in the types of improvements and uses that can occur in the low-lying area. Improvements in the riverlands will be subject to US Army Corps review and approval to meet flood control measures for San Lorenzo River.



Low-Lying Riverlands

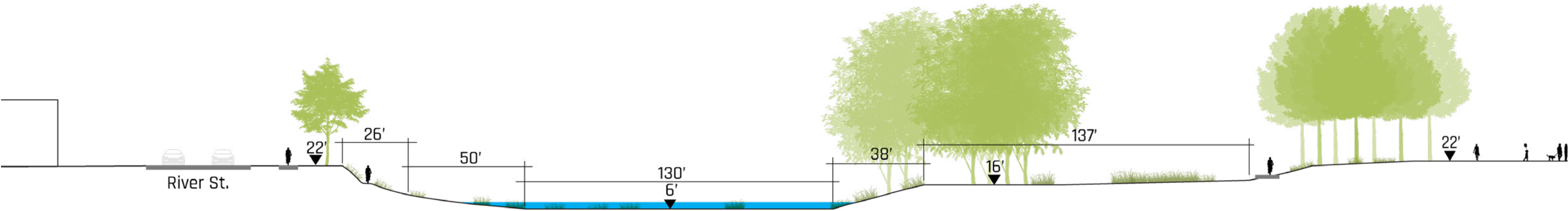


Riverlands Designed to Flood, January 2023

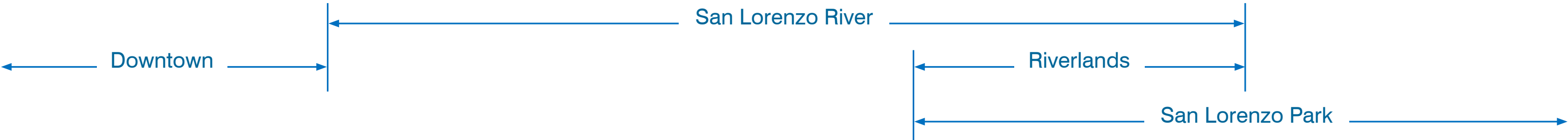
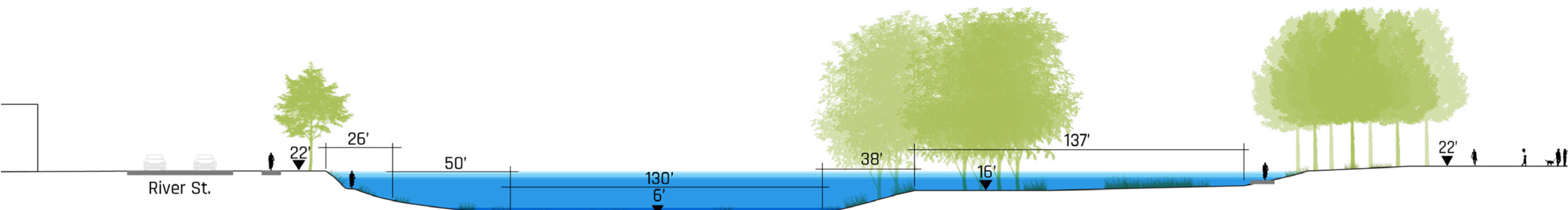


# Existing San Lorenzo River Section

Section 1 : Low water volume



Section 2 : High water volume





# Roughness & Freeboard

Roughness, defined as the frictional resistance water experiences when passing over land and channel features, is a considerable factor in determining the amount and type of improvements that can occur in the riverlands. Freeboard is the distance between the water surface and the top of the riverbank, and suggests the additional amount of roughness that the channel can accommodate. Roughness and freeboard influence the capacity of the river to hold and convey a certain volume of water. A river channel, like the San Lorenzo River, that has a high roughness and limited freeboard has limited capacity to accommodate more water volume, particularly

## Elements Contributing to Roughness



Shrubs

Dunes

Logs /  
Woody Material

Structures

Rocks

Trees

in large storms or as sea levels rise. A memorandum prepared by ESA in December 2023 identified that the San Lorenzo River in the San Lorenzo Park reach currently has a high roughness and limited freeboard. It is anticipated that to add improvements to the riverlands such as native plants, trees, pathways, or other improvements will require that the overall roughness is reduced, the freeboard is increased, the channel volume is increased, or a combination. Additional analysis of the riverlands is required to evaluate the type and amount of improvements that are feasible for the riverlands due to the current roughness and freeboard.

## Freeboard

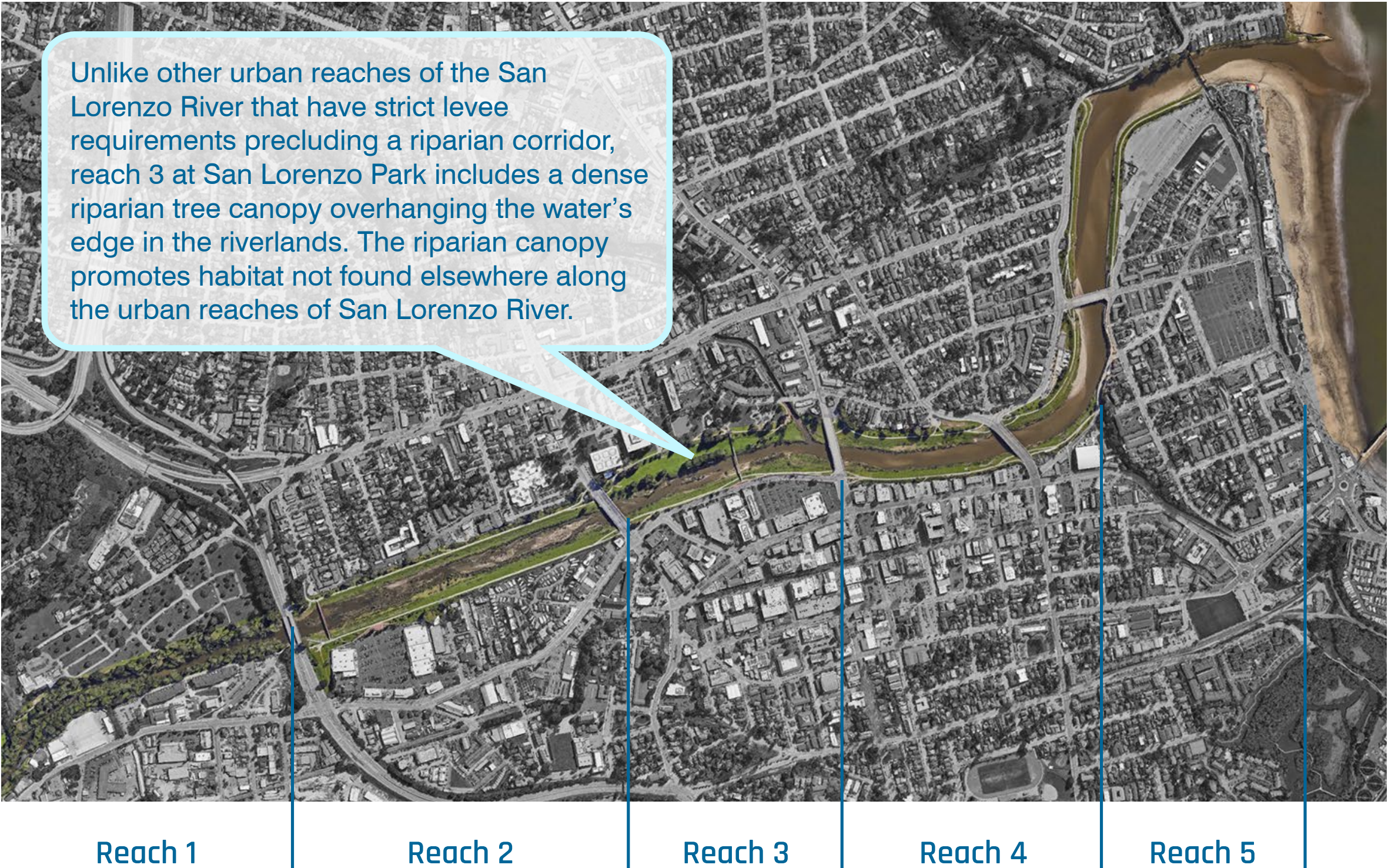


Limited freeboard in existing channel.  
Little to no room to add roughness.



# Unique River Reach

Unlike other urban reaches of the San Lorenzo River that have strict levee requirements precluding a riparian corridor, reach 3 at San Lorenzo Park includes a dense riparian tree canopy overhanging the water's edge in the riverlands. The riparian canopy promotes habitat not found elsewhere along the urban reaches of San Lorenzo River.



Reach 1



Reach 2



Reach 3



Reach 4



Reach 5







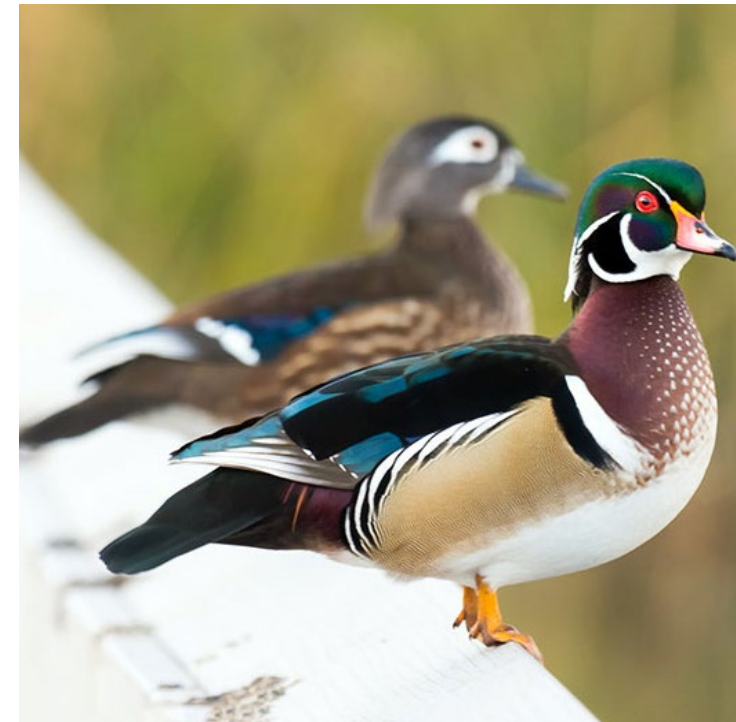
Dense riparian tree canopy overhanging San Lorenzo River.



# Habitat & Ecology

The park hosts numerous wildlife species along the river and in the park. The mature canopy cover along the riparian edge of the river allows for riparian habitat and species to exist in this location. The spaces adjacent to the river also offer valuable ecological potential and a reconnection to the river.

Right: San Lorenzo River & Park provide habitat for swallows, great horned owls, wood ducks, spawning Coho salmons, seals, and steelhead trout.





# Mature Trees

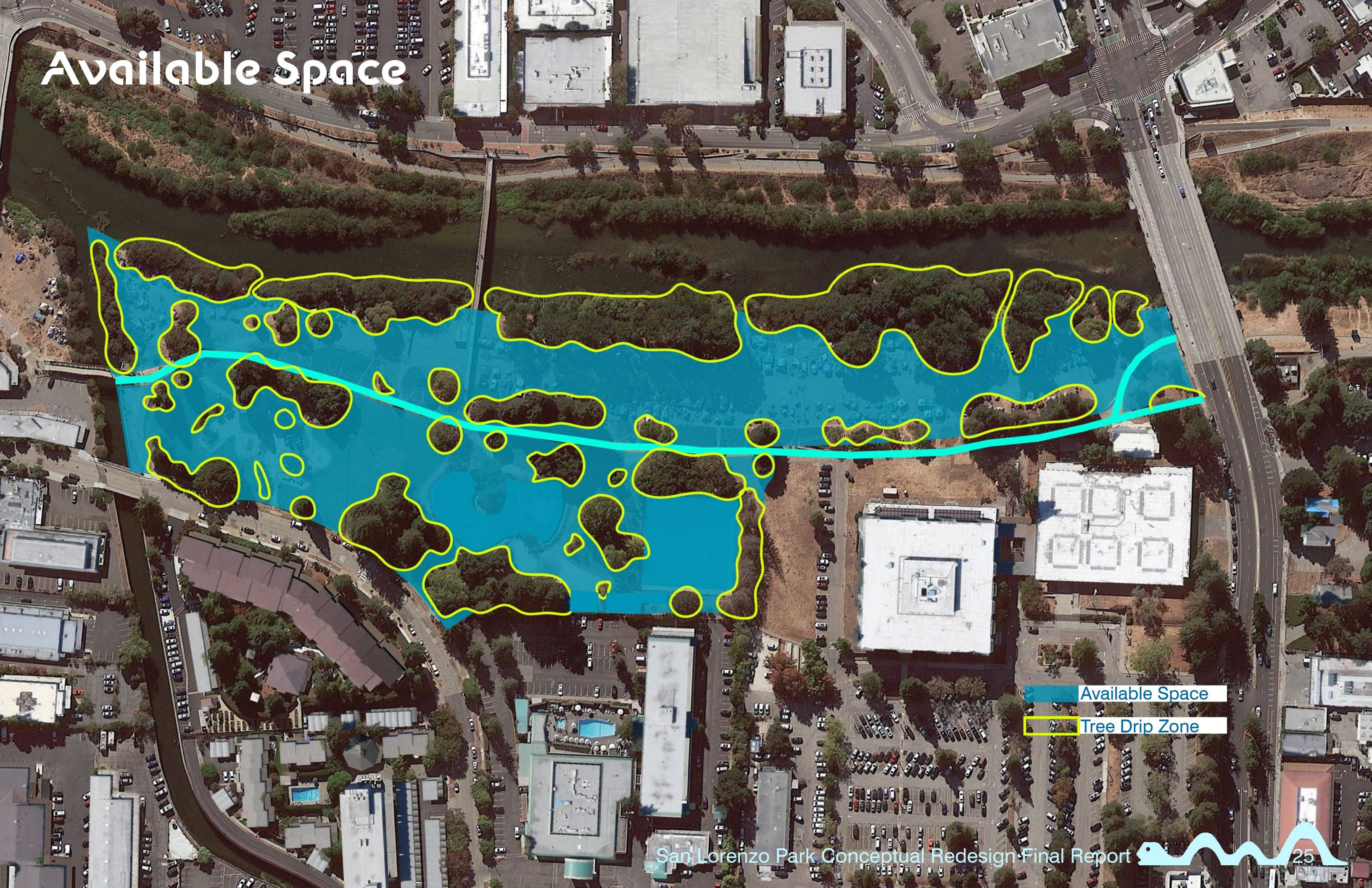
There is an extensive mature tree canopy in the park that contributes great value to the urban forest. Where heritage trees are located, the area within the drip line (beneath the canopy) needs to be preserved

in place with minimal improvements to preserve the trees. Heritage trees should be preserved where possible. The area outside of the drip line is the available space for programming.





# Available Space



Available Space  
Tree Drip Zone



# Existing Park Features & Facilities

The park today has a number of existing features and facilities, some cherished while others are outdated, providing marginal use, and are not conducive to the desired level of park use for a community-serving, centrally-located downtown park. There are areas of the park that are currently underutilized or under planted. Many of the features and facilities are in need of repair, replacement, or removal.

**Pathways:** Pathways have degraded and are crumbling.

**Stairs & Ramps:** Stair infrastructure in the slope between the uplands and riverlands is degraded.

**Utilities & Irrigation:** Electrical and irrigation infrastructure in the riverlands is defunct. Irrigation in the uplands is outdated and in need of repair.

**Plumbing:** Plumbing in the restroom has been degraded due to vandalism.

**Irrigation lines:** Irrigation lines cannot be touched.

**Restroom:** The restroom has been degraded due to vandalism.

**Lawns:** Existing turf areas have hosted numerous events in the park, but experience drainage issues and could be refreshed and include better drainage and irrigation.

**Trees:** The park includes many heritage and smaller diameter trees that should be preserved where possible. The park also includes some dead and diseased trees. Future phases should conduct an arborist study and remove dead or diseased trees per arborist recommendations.

**Lorenzo:** The sea serpent sculpture named Lorenzo was recently repainted by the community and is a cherished park feature.

**The Pond:** The liner and concrete has degraded and repair is not feasible, pumps and portions of the aeration system have failed.

**Lawn Bowling:** Synthetic turf on the lawn bowling court is in need of replacement.

**Chinatown Bridge:** The Chinatown Bridge and dragon archway are in fine and usable condition.

**Playground:** The playground is original to 1964, experiences drainage issues, and no longer meets best practices or inclusivity standards for playgrounds.

**Riverlands:** Riverlands area lawn has been abandoned and is overgrown.

**Modernization:** The park could be modernized to include more features to improve the use of people of all different types of abilities.





Recently repainted



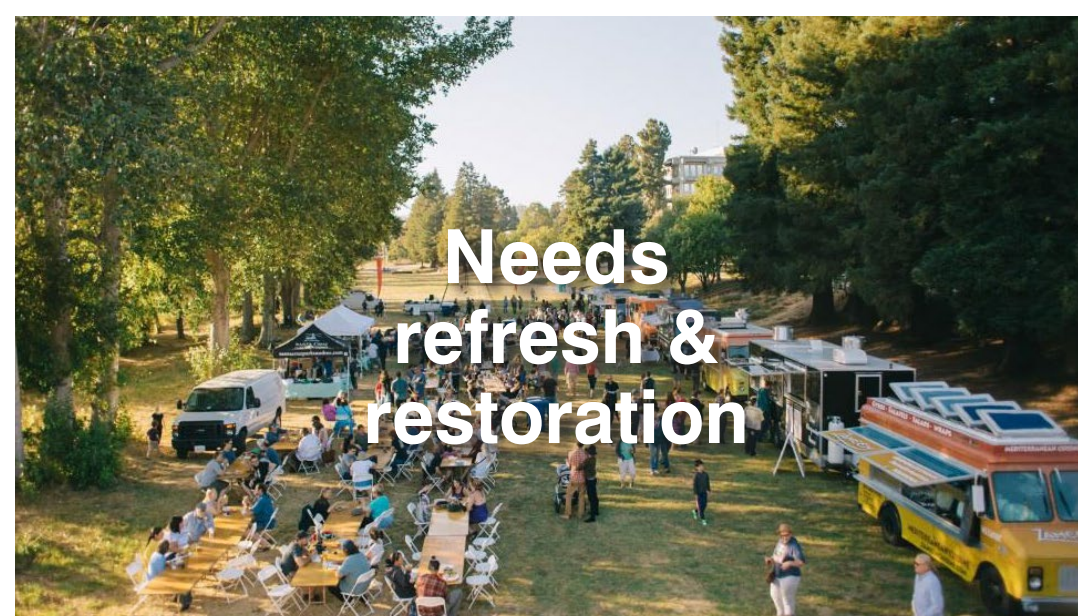
Preserve elements in good condition



Degraded pathways



Outdated playground



Needs refresh & restoration



Need replacement



Surfacing needs replacement



Tarpaper layer leaking



Degraded stairs







# Engagement Defines Need



# Community Engagement Process

To identify and confirm the community’s needs, the design team and Parks and Recreation Department staff conducted extensive community engagement in Stages 1-3 of the redesign process in the form of key stakeholder meetings, email correspondence, community meetings, and on-line surveys. Stage 1 consisted of research of existing conditions and observations, and community engagement to inform a needs assessment. Stage 2 consisted of drafting options for the park and developing the redesign plan direction, as well as community engagement to select the community preferred redesign plan and plan elements. Stage 3 consisted of refining the vision and concepts, as well as completing the final report. The engagement process was designed to gauge preferences for programs and amenities that are desired for the park, as well as what aspects of the park people would like to see preserved and revitalized. Engagement tools asked respondents about demographics, park uses, the park today, and the park tomorrow. The process identified a range of diverse needs for San Lorenzo Park. The process also identified a broad consensus for a park that is usable, safe, activated, loved, and promotes ecology.

## Select Quotes

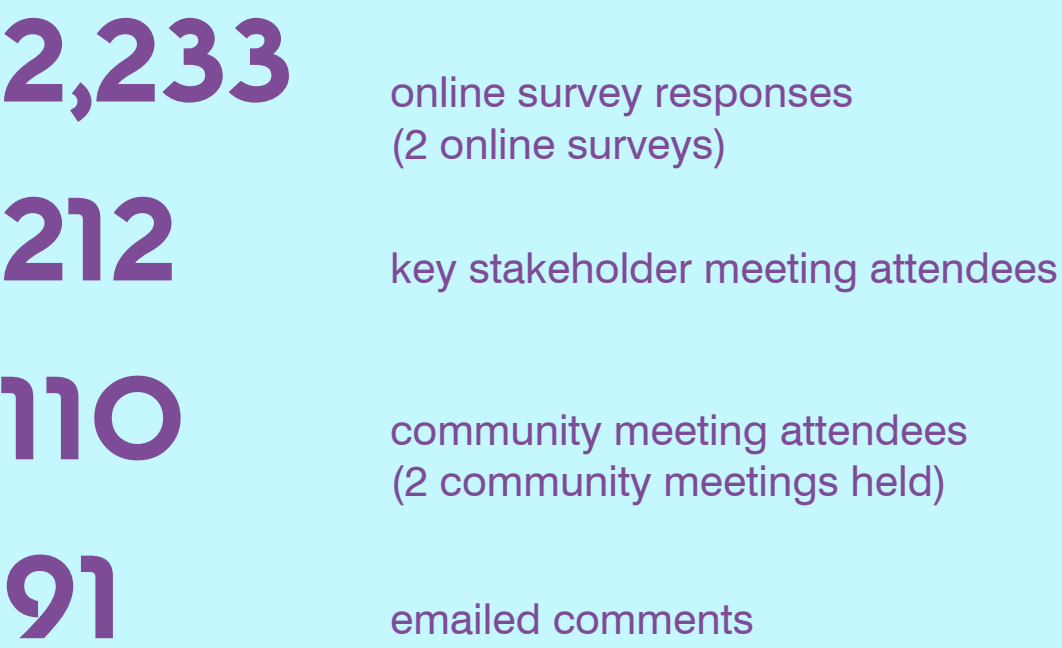
“San Lorenzo Park and the river are crown jewels in the city.”

“Restore sacredness to the land.”

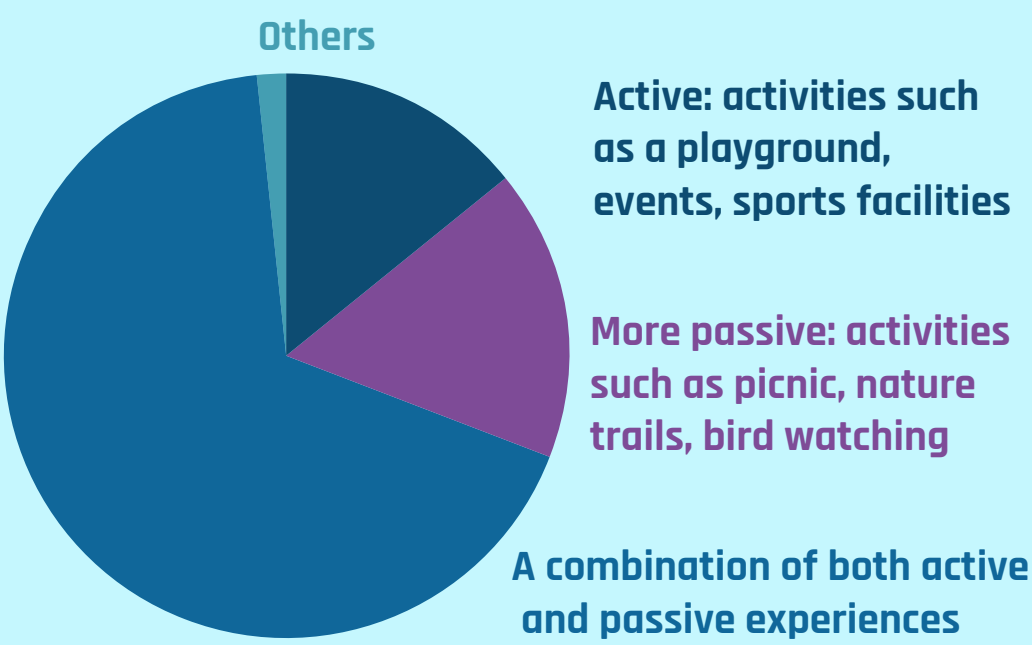
“We want to see the park as an asset to the community.”

“Keep Santa Cruz Memorable.”

## Engagement by the Numbers\*

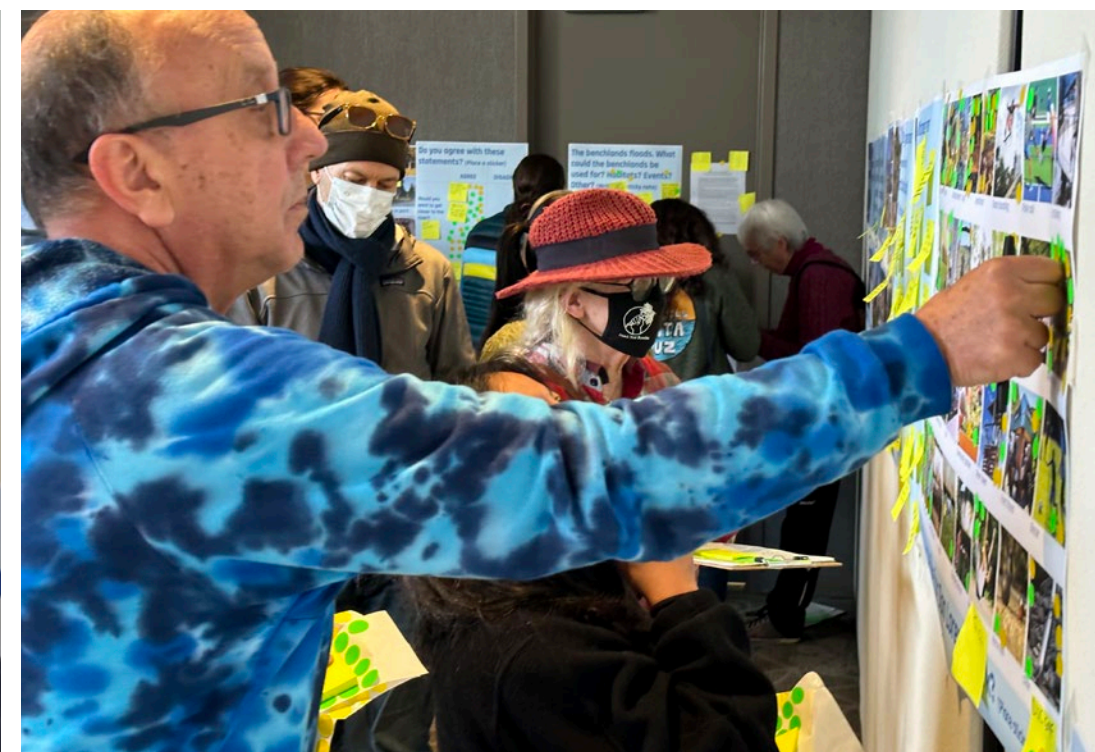


## Overall Park Experience



\* See Needs Assessment for more detailed information.





Stage 1 Engagement Images



# Opportunities

Based on the community engagement process, an analysis of the park's existing park features and conditions, and the city's maintenance and operational needs, Stage 1 identified ambitious and forward-thinking opportunities for San Lorenzo Park in the Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment defined the park opportunities, guiding principles, design goals, and potential programs that served as a guide during the redesign process to develop the community preferred vision and concepts for San Lorenzo Park. The following includes the identified opportunities, guiding principles, and design goals.

## Opportunities:

San Lorenzo Park has the potential to be transformative in unique and profound ways for Santa Cruz. The following opportunities are identified here to redesign San Lorenzo Park as a modern urban park that is equipped to respond to the evolving needs of a growing city with changing climatic conditions.

- Reposition the park for an evolving city
- Restore ecology
- Promote traditions and a civic destination
- Preserve and revitalize existing park features
- Prioritize inclusivity
- Design for safety and operations
- Foster partnerships and stewardship



Restore  
ecology



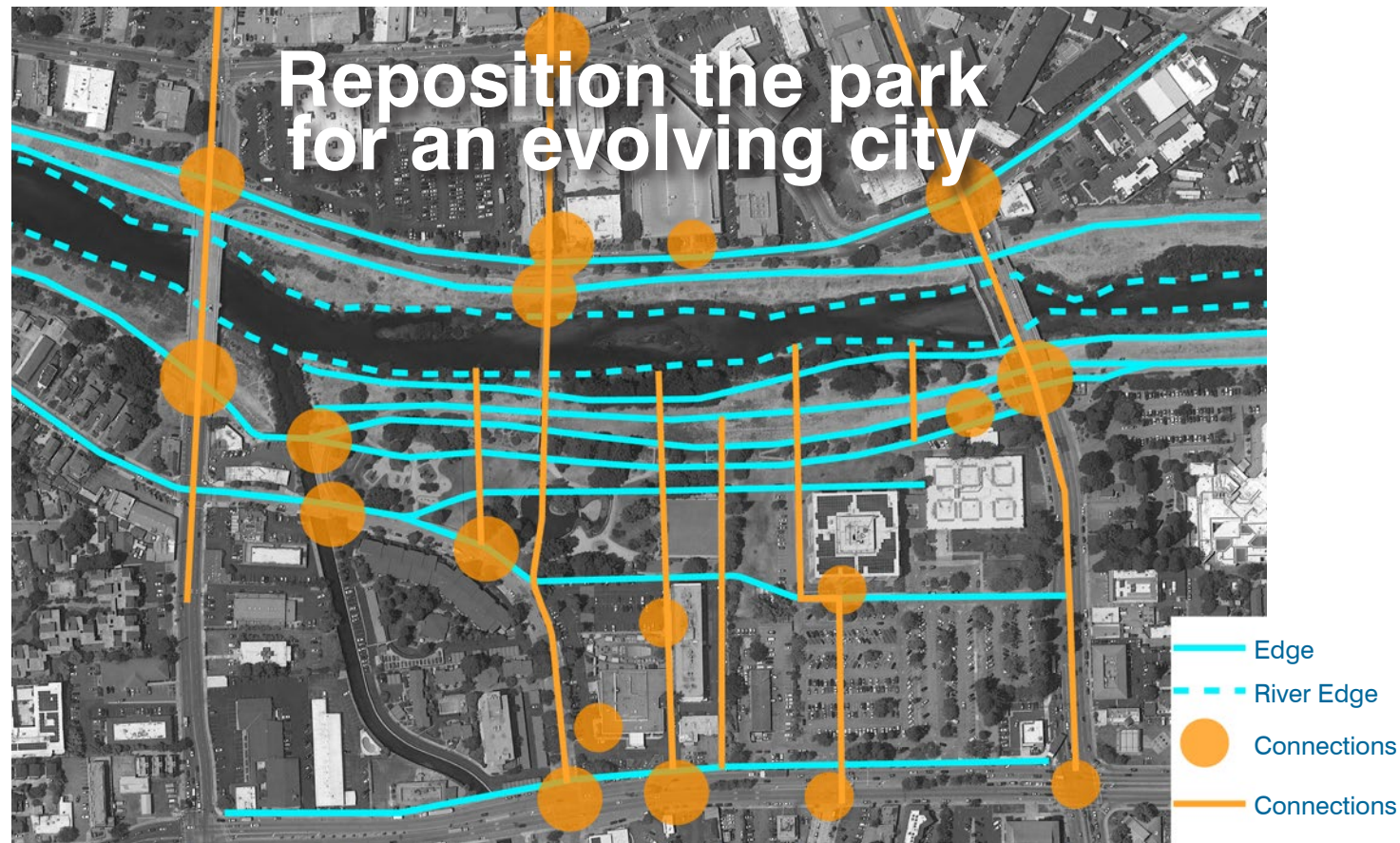
Promote  
traditions & a  
civic destination



Preserve &  
revitalize existing  
park features



## Reposition the park for an evolving city



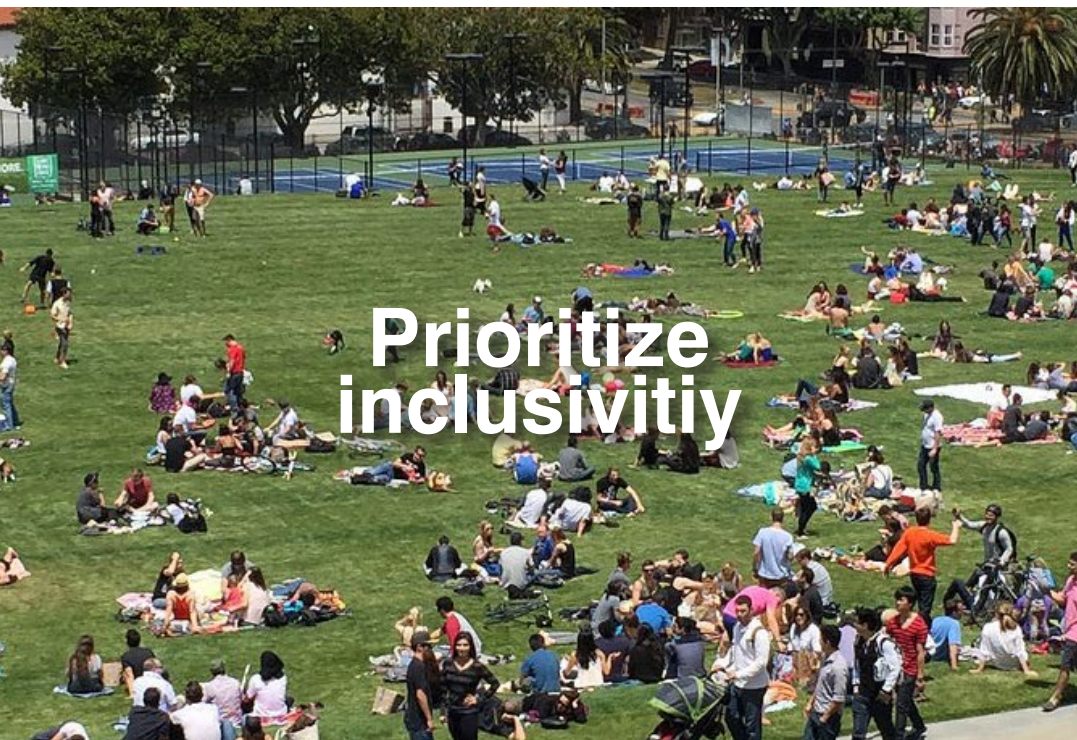
As part of the transformation of San Lorenzo Park, this process included re-branding certain terminology and definitions formerly used for areas of San Lorenzo Park. Formerly referred to as the “benchlands”, this process referred to the lower-lying areas adjacent to the river as the “riverlands”. Formerly referred to as the “upper park”, this process referred to the areas at higher elevations adjacent to Dakota Avenue and the trail as the “uplands”.

During the engagement process, it also became clear that “Lorenzo” the sea serpent is a cherished part of the park. This effort embraces Lorenzo as an important icon for the park and has incorporated a logo of Lorenzo into the design process.



Logo of “Lorenzo” the sea serpent

## Prioritize inclusivity



## Design for safety & operations



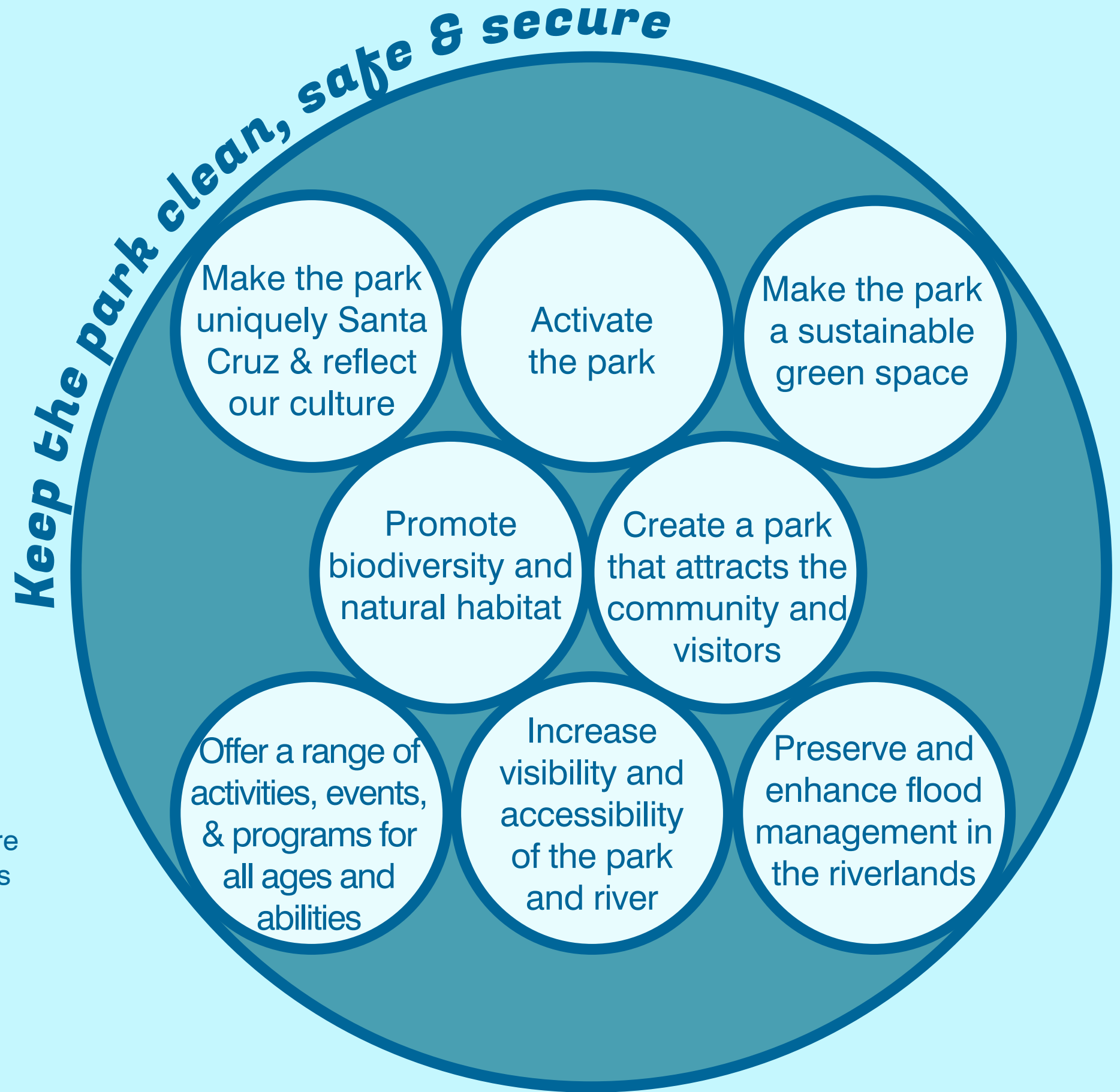
## Foster partnerships & stewardship





# Guiding Principles

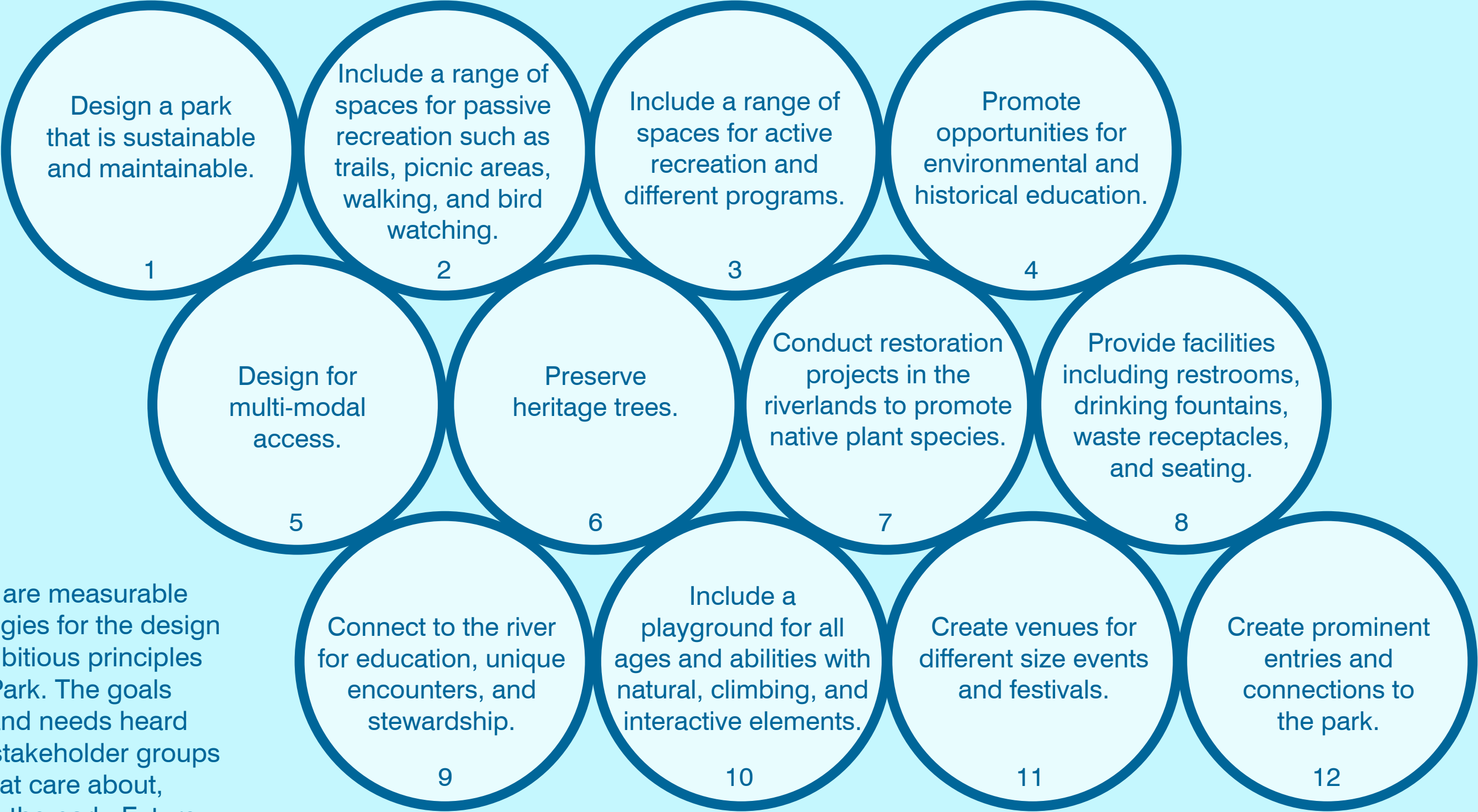
The guiding principles are established to guide the ambitions and vision for San Lorenzo Park, and accomplish the forward-thinking opportunities. The principles reflect the sentiments and needs heard from the diverse stakeholder groups and individuals that care about, use, and maintain the park. Future design efforts should embrace these principles as integral to the design and future for San Lorenzo Park.





# Design Goals

The design goals are measurable and tactical strategies for the design to achieve the ambitious principles for San Lorenzo Park. The goals reflect the ideas and needs heard from the diverse stakeholder groups and individuals that care about, use, and maintain the park. Future design efforts should refer back to the design goals to envision a park that is beautiful, usable, cherished, fundable, constructible, supported, and loved.







Aerial visualization of San Lorenzo Park:  
program elements, materials, and features  
may vary from final conceptual design.



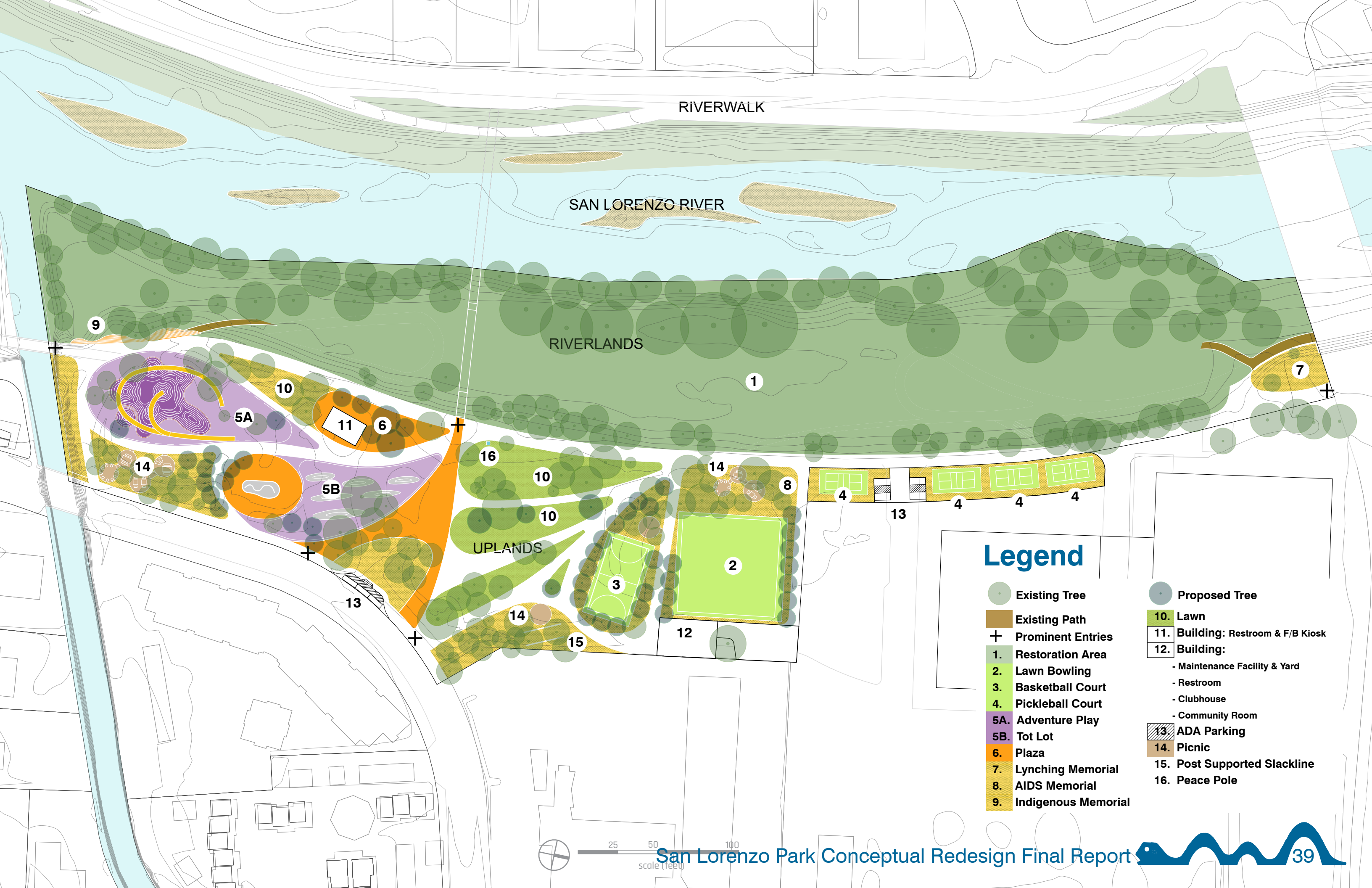
# Vision



# Conceptual Redesign

The concepts were created based on opportunities, guiding principles, and design goals to address the identified needs of the Santa Cruz community. The conceptual redesign proposes a safe, usable, and vibrant downtown park for Santa Cruz residents and visitors alike. The future San Lorenzo Park could be both a community and destination park that is transformative for Santa Cruz. The design includes site-wide elements as well as unique features to improve the park's connectivity, accessibility, usability, navigability, sustainability, programmability, ecology, pedagogy, and inclusivity, as well as the ability to maintain the park on an on-going basis. A mix of possible programs and uses is included based on community preferences, as well as to keep the park vibrant, safe, usable, comfortable, and secure throughout the day and year. The park includes two areas: the uplands and the riverlands. The following pages describe the design intent and features in both the uplands and riverlands. These concepts were developed through a community process. Additional outreach, studies and analyses are necessary to further refine the concepts prior to any future park project.







# Uplands

## Uplands Description

The uplands is approximately 6.3 acres located between Dakota Avenue, the Paradox Hotel, and the County of Santa Cruz Government Center to the west, Branciforte Creek to the south, Water Street to the north, and the top of slope above the riverlands to the east. The uplands concept is designed to support a wide variety of recreational activities, encouraging visitors to spend time in the park rather than simply passing through. The design includes unique play, recreation, and memorial features that reflect the unique characteristics and history of Santa Cruz. The uplands design includes a range of possible programs and uses to keep the park vibrant throughout the day.

## Concept Design and Layout

The design concept of the uplands was inspired by the forms of the San Lorenzo River and Santa Cruz Riverwalk, and the layout was derived from the geometries of the river and site. The conceptual layout is configured to preserve existing trees to the greatest extent possible and work with existing site topography. Pathways are oriented in the north-south and east-west directions to promote connectivity and circulation. Play features are grouped closer to Dakota Avenue. Recreation, event, and sport facilities are grouped closer to the Paradox and County properties. Plazas with public amenities are centrally located in the uplands at and connecting to prominent entries and the Chinatown Bridge.

## Potential Uses and Programs

The needs assessment and community engagement identified possible uses and programs for the uplands, including the following:

- a large inclusive playground
- a medium to large flexible space for recreation and events
- sport courts
- flexible plaza space
- a multi-purpose building & restrooms
- prominent entries
- landscape infrastructure & furnishings
- memorials & art
- planting areas
- multi-use trails
- maintenance facilities

## Design Elements, Site Furnishings & Features

Elements, furnishings, and features should strive to minimize maintenance and operation costs, should meet or exceed code, and should be highly durable for an urban downtown park condition. The elements, furnishings, and features should be designed and selected for inclusivity.

### Art

The uplands could include locations for permanent and rotating art pieces.

### Bicycle Infrastructure

The uplands should include bicycle racks near entries and within plazas. Bicycle repair and water bottle filling stations could be located near the multi-use path.

## Central Plaza

The concept includes plazas centrally located in the uplands with connections to Dakota Avenue, the multi-use trail, and the Chinatown Bridge. Plazas could include fixed seating, planters, trees, bicycle racks, drinking fountains, signage, and landscape infrastructure. Plazas should be fully accessible. Plaza spaces could be flexible spaces to allow for a range of activities including outdoor fitness, events, rollerskating, games, pop-up programs, and educational classes.

## Earthworks

Earthworks could create variation, terraced seating, an amphitheater, overlooks, points of intrigue, play areas, planting areas, or other program elements.

## Fixed and Loose Furnishings

The uplands should include fixed furnishings consisting of waste and recycling receptacles, drinking fountains, and varied seating, benches, and seatwalls. Seating and benches could be located near and in plazas, near entries, near play areas, at overlooks and vistas, at memorials, along trails, and in picnic areas.

## Irrigation

Planting areas in the uplands including turf areas should include a new irrigation system with automated climate-controlled sensors.





Playground



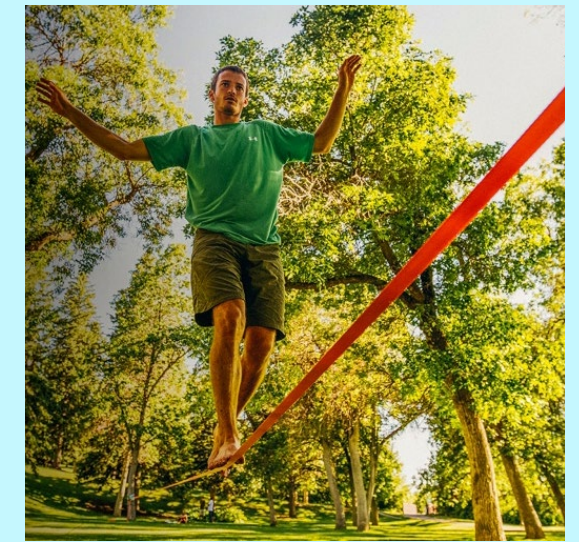
Basketball



Lawn Bowling



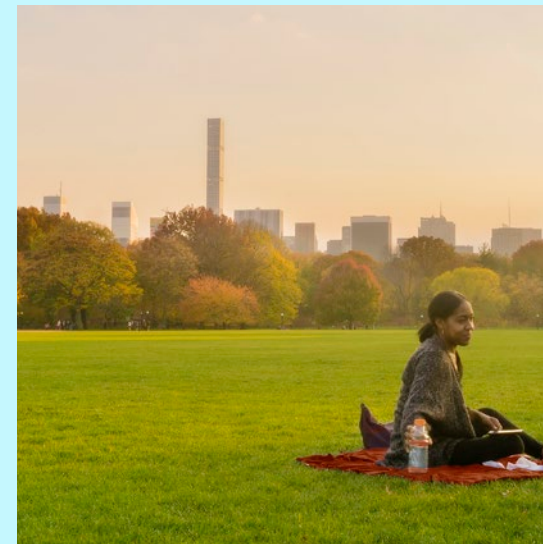
Pickleball



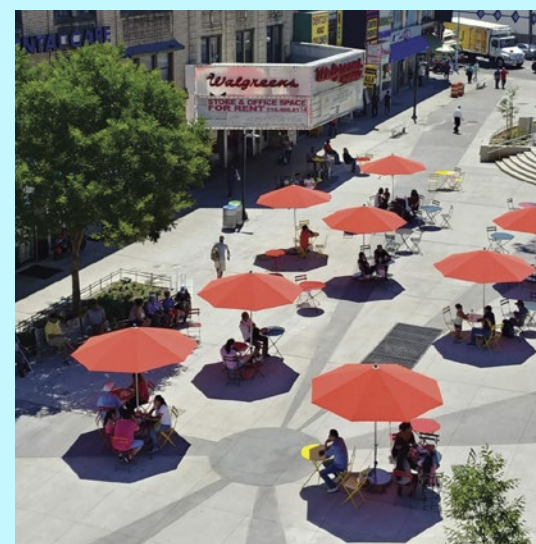
Slackline



Picnic Areas



Multi-purpose Lawn



Plazas



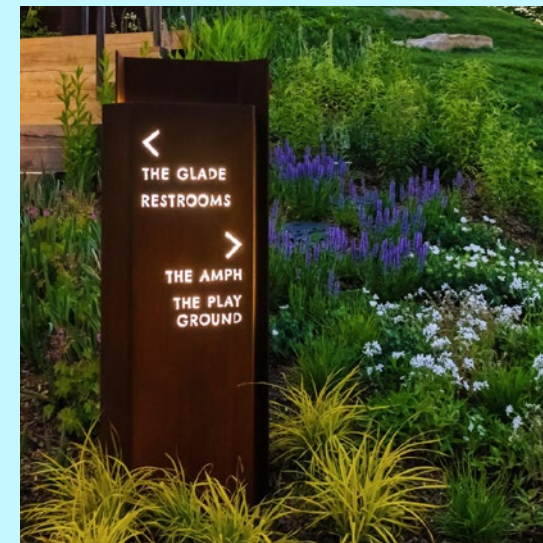
Prominent Entries



Multi-purpose Building



Planting Areas



Signage & Interpretation



Memorials

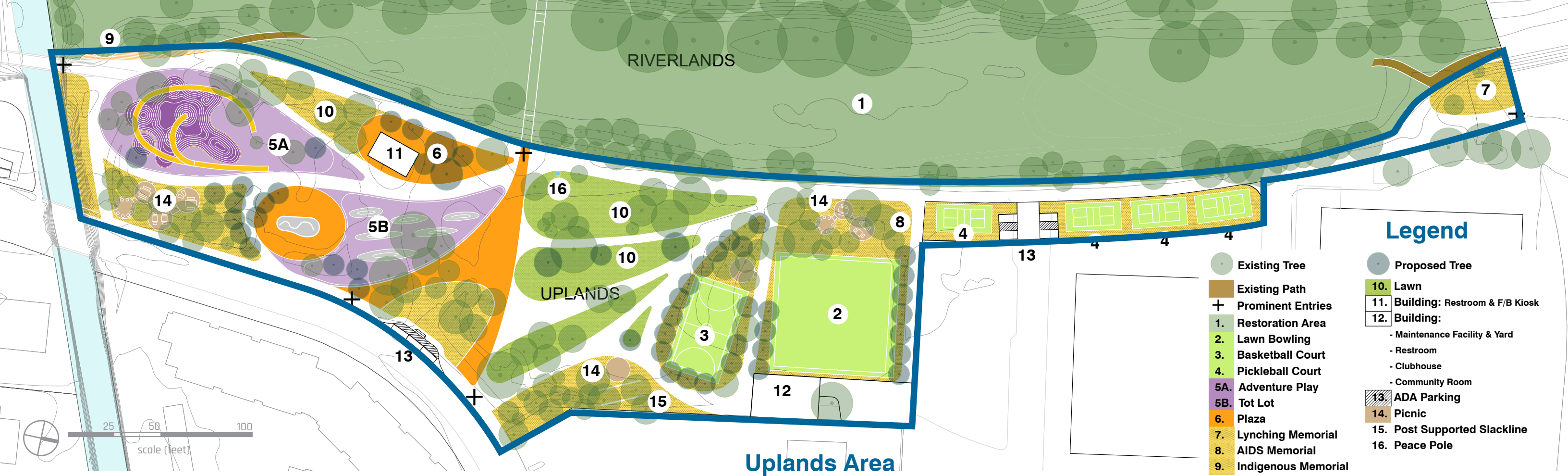


Art & Sculpture



Mobile Device Charging Stations & Wi-Fi





### Landscape Infrastructure

Plazas in the uplands could include free public wifi, mobile device charging stations, and food truck hook-up stations. Power hook-ups could be provided in plazas and near the multi-purpose lawn for events. The uplands could include security cameras for safety measures.

### Lighting

Lighting could be provided in the uplands along all pathways, play areas, plazas, and sport courts. All lighting should be dark-sky compliant and should maximize energy efficiency

### Lorenzo

Lorenzo the sea serpent sculpture should be preserved within a prominent plaza. Play elements should be integrated with Lorenzo where feasible.

A historical plaque documenting the history of the sculpture could be located near Lorenzo in the plaza.

### Maintenance

A maintenance facility should be located in the uplands. The maintenance facility may include a building and lay down yard. Consideration should be given to choose a location to allow for two points of access.

### Memorials

The park should include memorials in the uplands honoring and remembering historical events and peoples such as the peace pole, lynching plaque, Chinatown Bridge, bear and bull fights, AIDS memorial, indigenous history, and San Lorenzo Park history. Existing plaques and memorials should be preserved within the park and integrated into future

landscaping improvements.

### Multi-Purpose Buildings

The uplands could include one to two buildings to provide public restrooms, a multi-purpose space for community use, a food and beverage kiosk, storage space for City departments, and maintenance facilities.

### Multi-Purpose Lawn

The multi-purpose lawn should be made of turf and include drainage and irrigation. In the concept, the multi-purpose lawn is divided into multiple spaces that can be used for smaller activities or combined for larger footprint activities. The lawn could accommodate a range of uses, including pick-up sports, events, pop-up events, outdoor fitness, picnics, among other uses.



**Parking**

Future consideration should be given to incorporate ADA parking spaces. Some options include adding them within the Dakota Avenue right-of-way near a prominent entryway and adjacent to the multi-use trail at the end of Director’s Row.

**Pathways**

Pathways and trails in the uplands should be designed to be multi-modal and ADA accessible. Pathways and trails should minimize conflicts between users. Pathways could be concrete, asphalt, stabilized decomposed granite, or pavers. Decomposed granite is not preferred given the short lifespan, but could be used for short-term improvements or less frequented areas.

**Picnic Areas**

Multiple picnic areas could be provided in the uplands.

**Planting & Trees**

Planting areas in the uplands could include turf, raised planters, meadow-like planting, and trees. Plants and trees should be native or adapted to the Santa Cruz climate, be low-maintenance and low-water use, include seasonal color, and promote habitat. Future work near trees would need to be performed following the direction and supervision of an arborist.

**Playground**

The playground should be an inclusive playground for a range of ages and abilities. It may include interpretive/educational play, nature play, physical play, and/or sensory play. Play elements could include a mix of swings, climbing, slides, bridges,

balancing, water, STEM, and an overlook viewing the confluence. The play area could include play structures, play or fitness equipment, pathways, earthworks, play elements and pathways incorporated into earthworks, and planting. Play elements could make reference to the unique features and destinations of Santa Cruz to make the park uniquely Santa Cruz. Play surfacing would need to meet playground safety and ADA requirements. The perimeter of the play areas could be defined by planting, earthworks, and fencing with gates for a complete perimeter and accessible entries.

**Prominent Entries**

The uplands design concept includes both prominent and regular park entries. Prominent entries could include signage and way-finding elements to orient users to the site as well as gateway markers, distinct paving, or other measures to signify the entries.

**Sport Courts**

The uplands design concept includes a basketball court and four pickleball courts. The City should try to preserve and refresh the lawn bowling court. City funds should only be used if the improvements will lead to significant use and community benefit. Courts could include a perimeter fence with accessible gates and access. A pole supported slackline could be installed for recreation.

**Stormwater Treatments**

To manage and treat stormwater runoff from hardscape surfaces in the uplands, bioretention areas could be located in the uplands.

**Surface Treatments & Drainage**

Hardscape areas in the uplands should be durable and ADA accessible. Surface materials for pathways and trails could include asphalt, concrete, stabilized decomposed granite, or pavers. Surface materials for plazas could include concrete or pavers. Hardscape areas should include adequate drainage including slot drains, trench drains, area drains, or others to prevent ponding or flooding.

**Signage**

Signage should be included throughout the park for orientation, way-finding, interpretive, and educational purposes. Signage elements should be easy to read, accessible, and in multiple languages. The signage palette should be consistent with the park character and design, and consistent throughout the park.

**Walls & Terraces**

Low walls or terraces could be needed in the uplands to accommodate grade changes, support a landform, create terraced seating, or define an edge. Walls should be made of concrete, rock, metal, or stone.





Aerial visualization of the San Lorenzo Park redesign concepts.





Visualization of the confluence overlook and memorial concept.





**Visualization of the Lorenzo sculpture, plaza, and restroom building concepts.**





**Visualization of the picnic area near the lawn bowling facility concept.**





**Visualization of the multi-use lawn and sports courts concepts.**





Visualization of the multi-use lawn concept during an event.





**Visualization of the multi-use trail along the pickleball courts concept.**





Visualization of the play area concept.



# Uplands Preliminary Cost Estimate

The conceptual redesign of San Lorenzo Park represents a significant public investment in the future of downtown Santa Cruz. To support this vision, the design team has prepared a preliminary range of probable construction costs for key project components. This Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) estimate offers an early cost framework based on the conceptual-level design.

The estimate draws upon multiple sources, including:

- Reference information from the City of Santa Cruz Parks Master Plan
- Cost data from recent park and open space projects across the Bay Area
- Input from architectural and play equipment consultants
- Industry-standard pricing and current construction trends
- Allowances for elements where design detail is not yet defined

The estimate includes direct construction costs, contractor general conditions, overhead and profit, bonding, insurance, and a design contingency appropriate to this early phase. Soft costs—such as design fees, permitting, and temporary site measures—are not included.

This estimate is intended to inform future planning, funding strategies, and prioritization. It will be refined over time as the design advances and the level of detail increases.

At this time, the riverlands portion of the project is not included in the estimate, as there is not yet sufficient design detail to support a preliminary cost assessment.

**SITE IMPROVEMENTS (Includes Surfacing, Signage, Site Furnishings, Play and Recreational Equipment, Park Infrastructure & Utilities, Planting; Excludes Buildings):**

Cost Per Acre: \$2.2 Million-\$3 Million

Cost Per Square Foot: \$50-\$70

**SPECIFIC PROGRAM ELEMENT ALLOWANCES:**

Playground Equipment: \$1.7 Million - \$2.5 Million

Water Play Equipment: \$510,000 - 690,000

Specialty Play Items: \$550,000 - 750,000

Play Surfacing and Fencing: \$500,000-\$1 Million

Resurfacing for Lawn Bowling: \$425,000 - \$575,000

**BUILDING FACILITY ALLOWANCES:**

Maintenance Building: \$2.7 Million - \$3.7 Million

Restroom Building: \$1.4 Million - \$2 Million

**TOTAL UPLANDS REDESIGN ROM ESTIMATE RANGE:**

\$19.4 Million - \$26.25 Million



# Riverlands

## Riverlands Description

The riverlands is approximately 6.8 acres located between San Lorenzo River to the west, Water Street to the north, Branciforte Creek to the south, and the uplands to the east. The riverlands has an existing mature riparian tree canopy along the river, as well as a confluence at San Lorenzo River and Branciforte Creek, which are unique ecological features. The once large turf area between the mature trees and toe of slope is no longer maintained and is overgrown. There are three primary access points from the uplands area.

The riverlands, situated lower in elevation than the uplands, provide critical flood management for the San Lorenzo River as part of the levee system up- and down-stream from San Lorenzo Park. The ability for the river channel in the riverlands to manage large flood volumes depends on the amount of roughness in the river channel, the available freeboard on either side of the river, and the total river volume available. The ability of the riverlands to manage flood events will influence what types of improvements can occur in the riverlands. Major flood events impact the riverlands and require maintenance for removing debris and restoring river areas after storm events. Improvements in the riverlands should be able to withstand high-velocity flood events and should take into consideration maintenance costs and strategies for maintaining

and managing improvements in the riverlands long-term.

The Santa Cruz community has used the riverlands previously for recreation, bird watching, events, disc golf, encampments, and illegal activities. Improvements in the riverlands should take into consideration strategies to keep the riverlands safe and prevent illegal or unwanted activities from occurring.

The redesign process identified preferences for the riverlands ranging from natural restoration to a combination of restoration and multi-purpose space for events and recreation. The community also voiced desires for water access, trails, and small beaches. The design team explored multiple initial concepts for the riverlands and identified, with Planning Commission support, that further study and analysis is needed to evaluate feasible design options for the riverlands. This redesign concept maximizes restoration and includes optionality for other uses and programs.

## Concept Design and Layout

The riverlands concept is designed to maximize restoration, provide access for on-going maintenance and stewardship, and space for activities related to restoration including bird watching, hiking, educational opportunities, and stewardship. Future projects in the riverlands

should include flood management, restoration, trails, and access points. The layout allows flexibility for the design to evolve with future study. In future design phases, the design team should collaborate with Native American tribal communities to develop the preferred restoration design and best practices for the riverlands. Stewardship should be encouraged for on-going maintenance of the riverlands.

## Preferred Uses and Programs

The needs assessment and community engagement identified that the riverlands could include the following:

- restoration of riparian corridor
- hiking trails
- maintenance access paths
- river overlooks
- multi-purpose lawn area

## Native American Tribal Communities

The Riverlands offers a valuable opportunity to collaborate with local Native American tribal communities in honoring and sharing the cultural heritage of the historic Uypi tribe. These partnerships could support ecological restoration through a shared vision of management which demonstrates traditional stewardship, harvesting practices, and sense of place that reflect the Uypi people's connection to the land and its resources.





Natives + Habitat



Trails



Maintenance Access



Stewardship



Bird watching



Education

Ceremonial gatherings may serve as a way to honor, heal, and reconnect with the land. Educational and interpretive programs could highlight the traditions, stories, and lifeways of the area’s original inhabitants. Ancestral village structures could illustrate traditional building practices. Demonstration “gardens” where Indigenous stewardship practices are showcased can serve mother earth, the public, and other Tribes who call the San Lorenzo riverlands home.

**Irrigation**

Temporary irrigation could be provided for native planting areas. If temporary irrigation is not feasible, time plantings close to the wet season or water manually until seedlings are established. No permanent irrigation should be installed in the riverlands.

**Long-Term Management**

The riverlands should be designed for long-term health and to promote biodiversity and ecological functions. Long-term management strategies should monitor the riverlands on an on-going basis. Habitat areas could be closed to the public to preserve habitat, protect wildlife, and deter illegal activities. The design should take into consideration operational efficiency such that the City of Santa Cruz can maintain the riverlands with available staffing and resources. The City should engage adopt-a-park groups, community groups, non-profit organizations, Native American tribal communities, and the public in stewardship activities to care for and maintain the riverlands.

**Maintenance Pathways**

The existing vehicular access should be maintained to the riverlands for on-going maintenance and restoration efforts. Access should be restricted to maintenance, stewardship, and emergency vehicular activities only. Develop a natural restoration plan to ensure plantings enhance biodiversity, manage flooding, and include in the overall plan.

**Multi-Purpose Lawn Area**

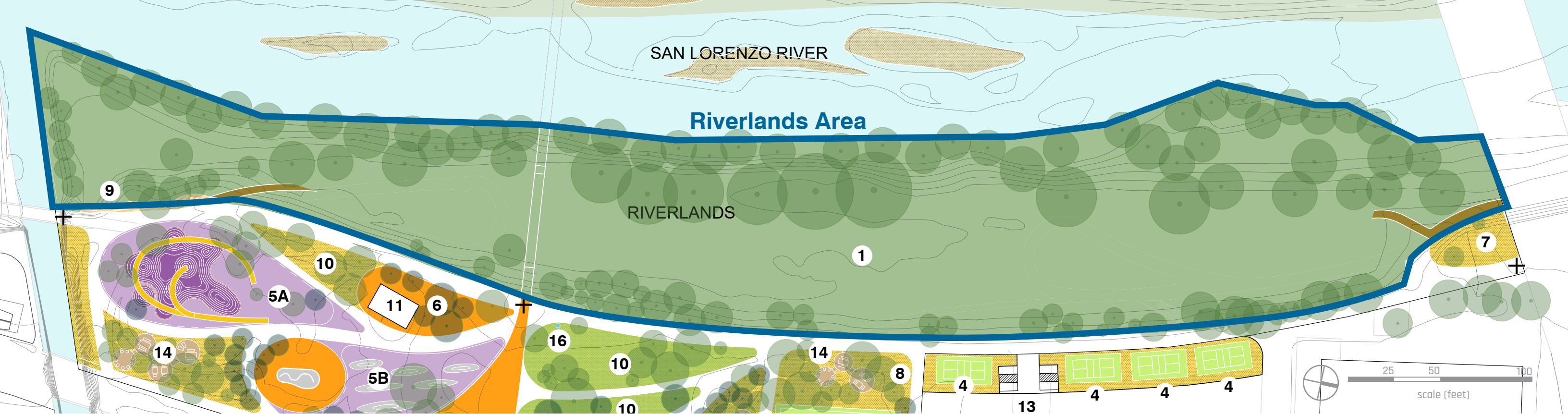
Should future study and analysis identify the need for a multi-purpose space in the riverlands, it needs to be designed to withstand high velocity flood conditions and to be ADA accessible.

**Vegetation Management Plan**

A Vegetation Management Plan should provide guidance for natural restoration strategies that support wildlife and biodiversity, while also managing vegetation for flood management. Key topics may include the selection and placement of native plants and trees, soil preparation, invasive species control, native species restoration, mowing and mulching practices, and debris removal following major storm events.

The plan must also account for practical, long-term maintenance and regulatory requirements and ensure that no actions compromise flood management objectives.
























### Trails

The riverlands could include hiking trails or footpaths for pedestrians only. Trails should be ADA accessible. Trails could provide access to overlooks, view the river, or water access where feasible.

### Wet Areas

Wet areas could be considered for the riverlands, such as seasonal wetlands, depressions for ponding, side channels, inlets, alcoves, or others to increase the river channel volume and promote niche habitats in the riverlands.

### Legend

- |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Existing Tree           |  Proposed Tree                       |
|  Existing Path          |  10. Lawn                           |
|  Prominent Entries      |  11. Building: Restroom & F/B Kiosk |
|  1. Restoration Area    |  12. Building:                      |
|  2. Lawn Bowling        | - Maintenance Facility & Yard                                                                                            |
|  3. Basketball Court    | - Restroom                                                                                                               |
|  4. Pickleball Court    | - Clubhouse                                                                                                              |
|  5A. Adventure Play     | - Community Room                                                                                                         |
|  5B. Tot Lot            |  13. ADA Parking                    |
|  6. Plaza               |  14. Picnic                         |
|  7. Lynching Memorial   | 15. Post Supported Slackline                                                                                             |
|  8. AIDS Memorial       | 16. Peace Pole                                                                                                           |
|  9. Indigenous Memorial |                                                                                                                          |



# Recommendations for Surrounding Areas

Beyond the limits of San Lorenzo Park, other improvements and strategies are recommended to enhance the experience and potential of the park. The following recommendations should be explored by the City:

## Art

Consider locating art along primary access routes to San Lorenzo Park in the form of an artwalk or public art collection that serves as a way-finding element and a destination to attract visitors to downtown and the park.

## County

The City and County should collaborate to maximize the potential use of the parcels near the park. Additionally, future development could consider improvements to access and visibility to the park from Ocean Street.

## Pathways

Pathways leading to San Lorenzo Park on perimeter streets, the Santa Cruz Riverwalk, and downtown could be improved with enhanced paving and embedded elements to guide people to San Lorenzo Park, while also creating legibility and consistent design elements throughout the downtown district and riverwalk.

## Parking

Street parking on Dakota Avenue is limited for visitors to the park. Parking is available in Parking Garage #10 on River Street and occasionally in the County Parking Lot for events. On-site signage and online information should be improved to inform visitors of parking options. The City and County should collaborate to maximize the potential to utilize parking in the County lot during non-peak periods for park access.

## Planting & Trees

The banks of the San Lorenzo River could be improved to increase the ecology and biodiversity of the river. Planting along primary access routes to San Lorenzo Park could be improved.

## Safety

Safety measures are needed to keep San Lorenzo park safe for all users. Safety infrastructure should be installed in the park including security cameras, lighting, visible site lines, gates, and signage. Park hours should be considered to promote activity throughout the day and evening as a safety measure. The City could consider a park host, park stewards, and/or patrols for an on-going presence in the park and eyes on the park.

## Shelters

The sanctioned camps in San Lorenzo Park posed safety, environmental, and infrastructure challenges and cannot be permitted. Shelters are needed elsewhere in Santa Cruz.

## Signage & Way-finding

Signage should be improved along the Santa Cruz Riverwalk and throughout downtown to guide people to San Lorenzo Park. Consider a consistent signage program for consistency, clarity, and legibility throughout downtown and the Santa Cruz Riverwalk.







