

# TONGVA PARK + KEN GENSER SQUARE

## Design Vision Statement | James Corner Field Operations

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Shaped by extensive community participation, the design of Tongva Park and Ken Genser Square creates a contemporary, sustainable, and transformative urban landscape that redefines the center of Santa Monica and makes new connections between Palisades Park, the Santa Monica Pier, and Santa Monica Civic Center.

Designed by James Corner Field Operations, best known for its design of New York's High Line, the park and square are a centerpiece for Santa Monica's Civic Center. James Corner describes the project as "creating a new heart for Santa Monica—a new destination and gathering place of great social, ecological, and symbolic value." He says, "We have sculpted a dramatic topography of hills and hollows and incorporated a very large number of native plant species to create a spectacular horticultural garden, replete with generous furnishing, water fountains, play elements, and activity areas. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with the people of Santa Monica to create a place together that feels so fresh and dynamic."

Inspired by the Southern California arroyo landscape of washes and ravines that once defined the site, a series of braided pathways appear to organically emerge from the footsteps of City Hall, extend west to Ocean Avenue, and weave the park into the fabric of the City. Dramatic rising and falling topography reinforces the fluid pathway system and organizes the site into four thematic hilltop areas, each calibrated to a different primary use and experience:

**Garden Hill** is defined by a series of seating alcoves and intimate display gardens that showcase a seasonally dynamic, native, and appropriately adapted Southern California plant palette;

**Discovery Hill** is a play space for children, offering a range of discovery experiences and settings with hill slides, a music wall, play elements, water feature, and forts embedded into a lush and shaded landscape;

**Observation Hill** reaches a height of 18 feet, offers the best views of the ocean and neighboring vicinity, and includes overlooks, a bridge, and public restroom tucked under the hill;

**Gathering Hill** provides open space for congregation and relaxation including a large multi-purpose lawn, seating terraces, and an informal picnic area;

**Ken Genser Square** provides new space for civic gathering and complements the City Hall landmark building.

Architectural features, a texturally rich material palette of boulders and pebbles, and lushly planted meadows and gardens reinforce the site's "arroyo wash" history, while at the same time, creating an exciting new identity that is unique to Santa Monica.

Water elements are poetically linked by a single runnel that flows downhill to the ocean. Their volume and presence increases the closer they are to the ocean.

Alcoves are carved into Tongva Park's hillsides to create interior garden bays with seating for contemplation or exterior bays with bike racks and social seating for community comings and goings.

Shell-like overlooks are perched on top of the tallest of the park's hills to frame iconic views and vistas of Santa Monica and the ocean.

A sculpture, Weather Field No. 1, by artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle with its grid of tall stainless poles with weather vanes and anemometers is located on a berm of meadow grasses. As a complete and unified composition, all of the varied elements of the new park and square create a new destination and symbolic heart for the community.

