

**Welcome to Test Plot**  
**an ongoing experiment**  
**in community-based ecological restoration**  
**of our public lands**




**2nd Los Angeles Urban Soil Symposium**

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**Keywords:**

Community-based land care  
landscape maintenance  
indigenous resource management  
tended wilderness  
models of reciprocity  
disturbance ecology  
non-equilibrium theory of ecosystem stability  
globalization of the environment  
ruderal aesthetics  
novel landscapes  
regenerative landscapes  
projective ecologies  
design activism  
subversive stewardship



**"Our California landscapes [...] both natural and cultural, bear the indelible imprint of a medley of management techniques."**

**-M. Kat Anderson, from *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources***

**"From the modern ecological perspective, the apparent stability of current plant associations is an illusion; the only certainty is that things will be substantially different within fifty years."**

**-Peter del Tredici, from *The Role of Horticulture in a Changing World***



# Connecting back to the land



News

**GSD experts on a major barrier to climate crisis mitigation: “The majority of Americans have little experience with the land and its rhythms”**



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PARKS AND RECREATION | AUG. 11, 2021

**I Tackled My Climate Anxiety by Becoming a Parks Department Super Steward** *One weed at a time.*

By Stephanie Foo



The writer standing in Forest Park, Queens. Photo: DeSean McClinton-Holland

# Who is Test Plot?

Local residents  
Land caretakers & stewards  
Landscape Architects  
Teachers  
Students  
Ecologists  
Soil Scientists  
Gardners  
Wildlife enthusiasts



\* Each site has different partners based on land ownership and who the community caretakers are \*



# Mantras

**Bring back beauty + biodiversity**

**Low-tech, low-budget**

**Hands in the soil; land care is self-care**

**Honor and work with the seasons**

**Experimentation is good; permission to fail**

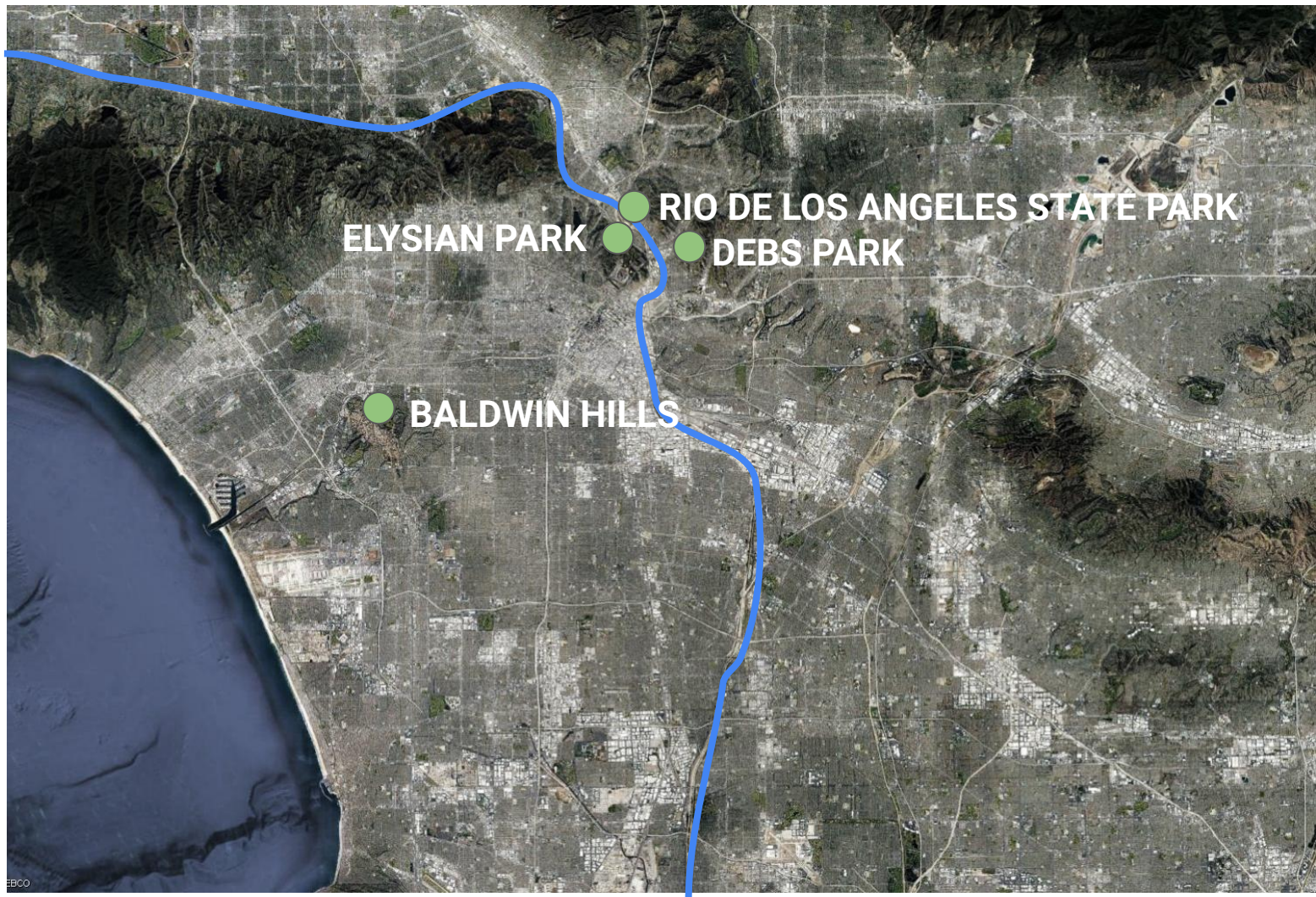
**Monitor + evaluate; pro-science**

**Expansion and scalability in mind**

**Seek a coalition of community groups**

**Between Native Gardening and Ecological Restoration**



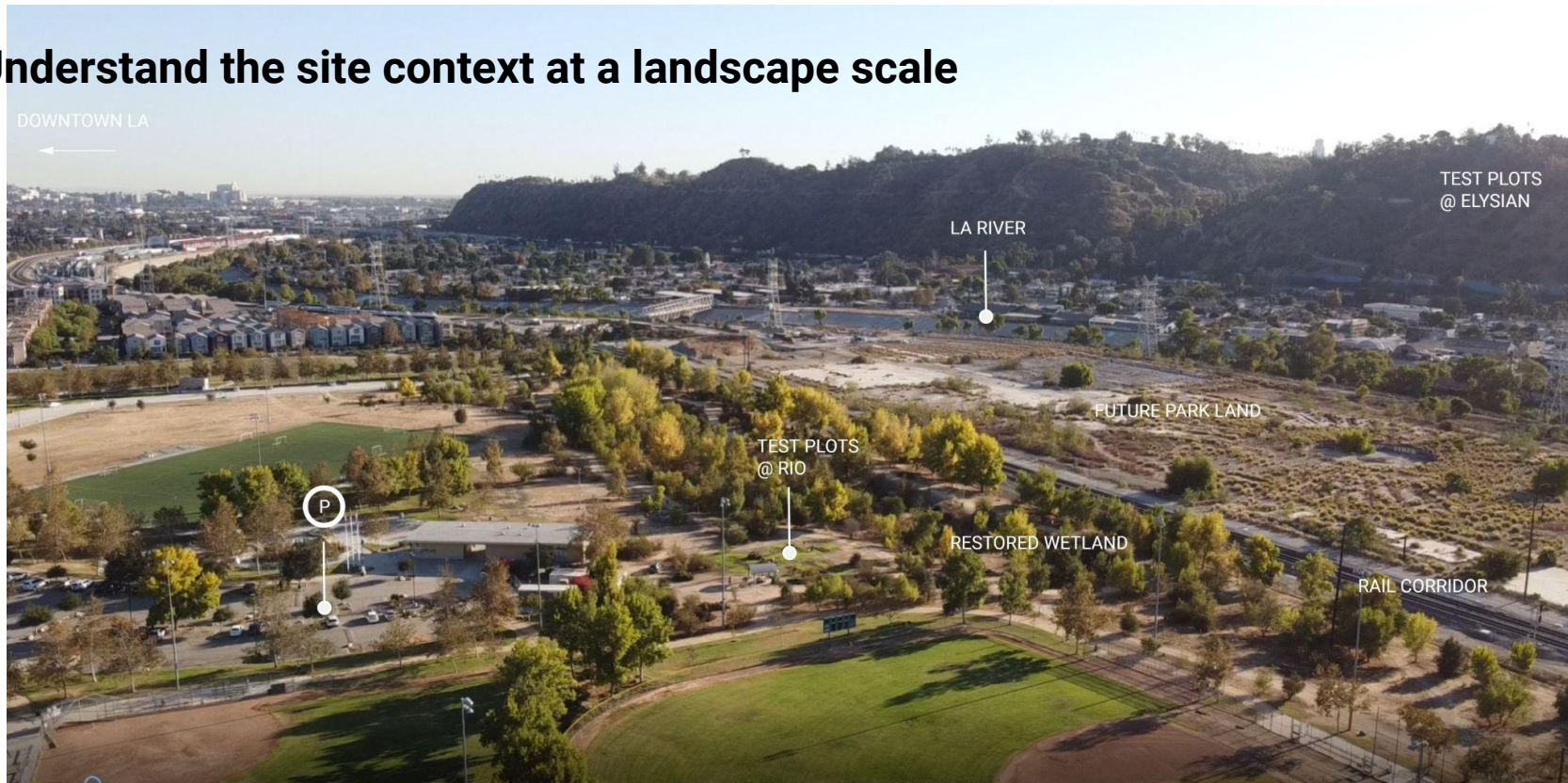




# The approach: site specificity is key



# 1. Understand the site context at a landscape scale



**Rio de Los Angeles Test Plot Partners:**  
USC Landscape Architecture & Urbanism  
Audubon Center @ Debs Park  
California State Park Champions  
Abuelas de Parque

- are we on a hill or a valley?
- to what degree has the land and watershed been manipulated?



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## 2. Site preparation depends on the challenges and opportunities



### Elysian Test Plot Partners:

Saturate California

Terremoto

LA Department of Recreation & Parks

Citizens Committee to Save Elysian Park



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### **Elysian Test Plot Partners:**

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- is there an extensive weed seed bank?
- how compacted are the soils? What is the land use history?
- microclimate factors i.e. proximity of eucalyptus, slope & runoff



### 3. Adapt plant palette to soil & management factors



*Rhus integrifolia*  
LEMONADE BERRY



*Artemisia californica*  
CA SAGEBRUSH



*Salvia mellifera*  
BLACK SAGE



*Zauschneria californica*  
CA FUSCHIA



*Yucca whipplei*  
OUR LORD'S CANDLE



*Baccharis pilularis*  
COYOTE BUSH



*Ceanothus oliganthus*  
HAIRY CEANOTHUS



*Eriogonum giganteum*  
GIANT BUCKWHEAT



*Eriogonum fasciculatum*  
CA BUCKWHEAT



*Salvia apiana*  
WHITE SAGE



#### Elysian Test Plot Partners:

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- how attractive will new plants be to gophers and rabbits?
- what happens when everything else is summer dormant?



### 3. Adapt plant palette to soil & management factors

Oak

Sage

Buckwheat

Baccharis

Sunflower

Artemisia

#### Coastal Climate



Engelmann  
Oak  
*Quercus engelmannii*



Hummingbird  
Sage  
*Salvia spathacea*



Sea Cliff Buckwheat  
*Eriogonum parvifolium*



Mulefat  
*Baccharis salicifolia*



Canyon  
Sunflower  
*Veregasia carpesioides*



Douglas'  
Sagewort  
*Artemisia douglasiana*

#### Current Climate



Coast  
Live Oak  
*Quercus agrifolia*



Black  
Sage  
*Salvia mellifera*



California  
Buckwheat  
*Eriogonum fasciculatum*  
var.  
*fasciculatum*



Coyote  
Bush  
*Baccharis pilularis*



Bush  
Sunflower  
*Encelia californica*



California  
Sagebrush  
*Artemisia californica*

#### Drier Climate



Scrub  
Oak  
*Quercus berberidifolia*



White Sage  
*Salvia apiana*



Eastern  
Mojave  
Buckwheat  
*Eriogonum fasciculatum*  
var. *foliosum*



Broom  
Baccharis  
*Baccharis sarothroides*



Brittlebush  
*Encelia farinosa*



Big Sagebrush  
*Artemisia tridentata*



#### Baldwin Hills Test Plot Partners:

USC Landscape Architecture & Urbanism  
LA Audubon  
Nature Nexus Institute

- Which plants may do better with warmer temperatures and heavier precipitation events?
- How might plant communities shift in the coming decades in response to climate change?

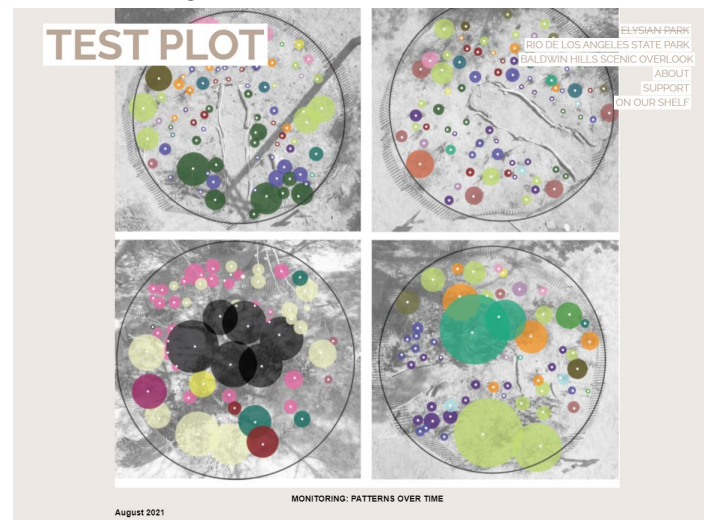
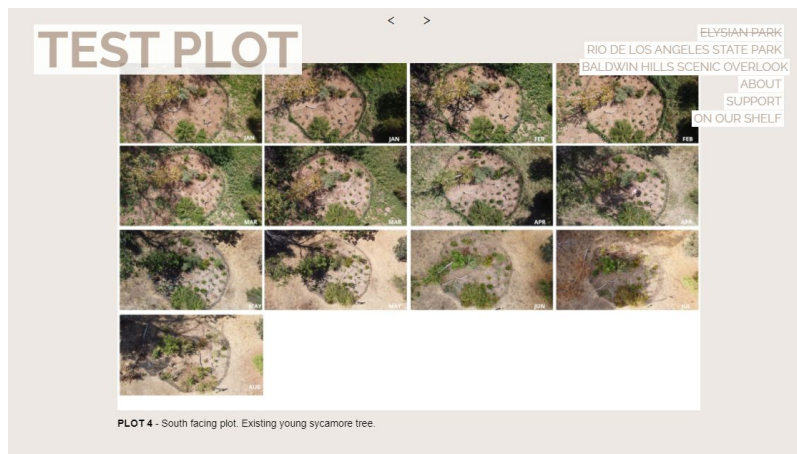
## 4. Tailor ongoing maintenance to community capacity



- What capacity / knowledge / style do community stewards bring?
- What kind of outreach and engagement works for each particular community?



# 4. Tailor ongoing maintenance to community capacity



# Why Test Plot

Healing the earth requires healing our connections with the natural world and with each other. Building an ethic of care requires ongoing stewardship.

Solutions need to be understood within geographical, ecological and hydrological extents, not political boundaries.

Open mindedness and flexibility is key.

**We think a community engagement model is a really special way to do this because of the healing that happens with both the land, and the people.**







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