

**Project Title:** Milton Street Park: A Way Forward for L.A.

**Location:** Los Angeles, California

**Category:** Design, Land and Water Reclamation

## **Project Summary**

### **Purpose**

After a six year community engagement and design process, Milton Street Park is the first landscape project of its scale to be built atop Los Angeles' infamous storm channels. Previously a levee made of compacted earth and concrete, the site served one function: to protect the adjacent neighborhood from seasonal flooding. The project unites the community's calls for safety, visibility, openness, beauty—with the ecological function of a resilient, 21st-century urban park. The design of the 1.2 acre parcel transforms the channel embankment into a gateway for the Ballona Creek Wetlands. Engineered as performative landscape infrastructure, the neighborhood park cleanses urban runoff before it enters Ballona Creek while simultaneously linking the daily routines of the community to the rich urban ecology of their backyard.

### **Role of Landscape Architect**

The landscape architect collaborated with the client throughout the community outreach and design process. Despite parcel's small size, city, state, and federal agencies maintained regulatory oversight, compelling the designers to effectively lead the client and community stakeholders through a complex series of permitting and construction milestones. Throughout the iterative design process, the team remained faithful to the voices from community meetings that urged for site safety, visibility, and openness to the surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Significance**

Once a wet meadow adjacent to Ballona Creek, Milton Street Park transforms a gated levee into a vibrant social space. Before construction, the 1.2-acre parcel was left in a state of neglect and contestation over private development, separating the neighborhood residents from recreational opportunities along the Ballona Creek Bike Trail. To transform the levee into a neighborhood park, the design team developed a robust stormwater treatment process, native planting palette, and series of recreational pathways and gathering spaces.

The overlapping program and multifunctional pathways become a key driver for the overall organization and layout of the park. Active and passive recreational paths weave through areas of ecological and educational uses. The park becomes a leading example of landscape infrastructure that performs ecological functions while improving the quality of neighborhood life.

### **Special Factors**

The Milton Street Park plant palette is inspired and derived from local native plant communities. The planting plan establishes continuity with the adjacent restored Ballona wetlands to educate visitors about the various dynamic plant communities of the region.

Stormwater is directed from existing storm drains into a diversion structure. Water then moves into a hydrodynamic separator unit that effectively removes trash and debris from the runoff. Water is then pumped via an underground system to designed bioswales with vegetated buffers. Here plants absorb dissolved pollutants and water is filtered as it settles. A detention/retention basin sits below the swales and collects water as it percolates through. Clean water slowly seeps into the water table and is also released into Ballona Creek.

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## Image Summary



Image: Milton 1 - Project aerial

Located along the Ballona Creek Watershed, Milton Street Park is the first major landscape project to be realized along Los Angeles' infamous storm channels and foregrounds best practices for development along the Los Angeles River.



Image: Milton2 - Scope + Opportunity

The Ballona Creek watershed is the third-largest urban watershed in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, encompassing 337 square kilometers. Milton Street Park is the first park of its kind in Los Angeles, revitalizing a levee to a functional urban park. The park is designed to filter stormwater before entering the Ballona Creek.

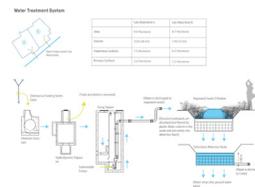


Image: Milton3 - Transformation through Filtration

The Milton Street Park serves two sub-watersheds adjacent to the site, by cleaning stormwater and run off before the water enters the Ballona Creek.



Image: Milton4 - A Neighborhood park

By tenaciously working across multiple public sectors, the design team helped guide all phases of development and implementation: creating a neighborhood park that promotes local ecologies, retains storm water, promotes safety, and enhances existing recreational opportunities.



Image: Milton5 - Before and After

The park was formerly a barren levee, without an ecological function. Today Milton Street Park encourages a variety of recreational users to visit the Ballona Creek Bike Trail. New trails and pathways splinter off of the bike trail, offering users of all speeds a variety of circulation routes.

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Image: Milton6 - Education

Once a wet meadow, new educational plaques along the walkways reveal the history of Ballona Creek's ecology and engage a new generation of landscape stewardship.



Image: Milton7 - Entrance Gate

The designers enhanced seasonal interest and design features that welcome users to the site; thereby increasing the number of recreational users.



Image: Milton8 - Connection to Nature

The design connects people to nature: renewing our relationship to seasonality and the greater region.



Image: Milton9 - Recreation

With a clear entry to the bike trail, more recreational users are taking advantage of the park - thereby increasing site security.



Image: Milton10 - Public Access

After six years of community engagement and design process, the new park has become a safe and beautiful amenity that enables users to engage with nature in their own backyard.