

PARK(ing) Day is an annual event in which artists, designers, landscape architects, and ordinary citizens transform metered parking spots into temporary public parks or art installations. Our entry for the 2015 Los Angeles event allowed us to spend the day engaged with the public, shedding light on underutilized ways of conserving water during and beyond California's record drought.

The ongoing drought in Los Angeles prompted us to do this PARK(ing) Day project. Our installation, dubbed "The Watering Hole," helped bring attention to one of the bigger picture problems – the fact that our city's infrastructure is not designed to capture and recycle storm water. The precious amount of rain that does fall in Los Angeles largely flows into pipes that take the water out to the ocean when it could otherwise be collected for reuse or infiltrated back into the ground to recharge the aquifer.

There's a huge amount of wasted storm water that could be recycled at the scale of a single parking space - just 140 SF. To help illustrate this problem for the public, we designed a volumetric representation in the form of a balloon cloud. The balloons are a one-to-one translation of the amount of rain that would fall in a normal year (1,344 gallons) and the actual amount that has fallen in this drought year (707 gallons) on this one parking spot. Visitors were curious to see the data on each balloon showing what that smaller volume of water could be used for and that if we captured and recycled this water, it could help sustain all the things we love in our daily life from a glass of wine to a shower.

People are actively taking charge of their water use each day, but we wanted to create a space that brings attention to drought issues that can't necessarily be addressed by one individual, but require a collective effort to overcome. As a result of this project, we hope to add to the conversation about drought and what it means to our way of living as we look to the future. We want people to see the drought as an opportunity rather than a roadblock. We hope people will begin to look at the city a little differently, wonder what's underneath the sidewalk they walk on, consider where our water goes, and become advocates for a more sustainable future.