

The City's Garden will be a new "outdoor interior" space that unifies environment and community, affirming its connection as the heart of San José.

One of the site's assets is its position in Downtown San José's urban transformation. It sits within Santa Clara Valley, once cultivated by Indigenous peoples and Spanish missions who understood the area's horticulture potential. The City's Garden honors this history while emphasizing innovation and sustainability—both key to the city's future.

Driving down Highway 87, its form unveils as a tower and arcade. On the ground, the arcade's sweeping curve reaches to each side of the park, bridging over the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek, creating a unified, coherent interior. Responding to urban conditions, the tower and arcade become a single object—a dynamic civic landmark.

AN OUTDOOR INTERIOR

The tower is an open-air structure composed of a grid system that organizes a dense, multi-dimensional vertical garden. The building's environment is central to its concept: Instead of managing heat through ecologically-unsound air-conditioning, the tower's vegetation naturally cools the park and cleans pollutants from the air. A net-zero impact will be achieved using natural resources such as ground temperature and sunlight.

The tower's design grew from functional parameters combined with an iconic form emphasizing a landmark's clarity. Rising from the basic cube, columns and beams define a single bay width. The framework is constructed of a jacketed steel wide-flange structure with plumbing and electrical, adding a steel lattice cladding that supports plant life. The flooring system supports lateral forces and contains rainwater harvesting systems for irrigation. Integrated into this system is a series of stairs and an elevator to transport visitors to an array of experiences.

By bringing the park's natural elements into the structure, the planted espalier tower creates a living landmark. Each level of the tower reveals an organized horticultural system. Seasonally-resilient, robust plant species will be selected; horticulture techniques honoring historic land use will be adapted. Visitors may take botany tours or wellness classes, eat at the park-to-table restaurant, or wander through its plantings. The espalier continues along the arcade, wherein a quarter-mile trail unifies the park and offers public functions and gardens.

The City's Garden creates a timeless form and spaces rooted in historical and spatial context. The overall scheme of a "living" tower and arcade produces a continuous civic space – a public realm where community, nature, and architecture are harmoniously unified.