

ODE TO NATURE

PROJECT STATEMENT

'Ode to Nature' is more than an iconic landmark - it is a project that combines three disparate experiences: the scale and awe of historical monuments, the sublime beauty of natural environments like the Yosemite Falls, and the social ambitions of San José; a valley of extraordinary opportunity and legacy. These three conditions come together in one immersive piece that is at the same time a unique icon, a spectacular work of land-art, and a magical public space.

The design takes its inspiration from the construction progress images of the San José Electric Light Tower; originally built in 1881 in downtown San José and collapsed during a storm in 1915.

The concept of 'Ode to Nature' is simple and poetic: a tower of water rises from the ground on West Side Area park, lifting up a 120'x120' portion of the park that then becomes a garden in the sky with public amenities, cafes, and an open-air amphitheater with an exclusive view of the surrounding cityscape. The structure of the project consists of four 24'x24' diagrid pillars that contains water pumps, mechanical equipment, and public lifts; allowing visitors to reach the park and its amenities. On the ground level visitors can access the 180' tall water-room through two openings, entering into a breathtaking open space defined only by the water's edge, where a floating path allows the visitors to "walk on water".

As its name suggests, "Ode to Nature" blurs the boundaries between architecture and landscape, proposing a new harmonious relationship between the built-form and natural environment: its "walls" are formed by falling water, the roof is a luscious garden, and its base a reflecting pool. The waterfall is collected and recycled in the volume of the floor, the foundations' piles are able to explore geothermal possibilities on site, and the walls of the roof garden are made of rammed earth, acting as a thermal mass. In addition to these net-zero energy design principles, the project tries to respect the environment within the Los Gatos Creek/Guadalupe River area, enhancing the park and using environmentally sensitive lighting.

The result is a breathtaking structure that establishes a strong visual presence during the day, night, and at a distance. It is a revolutionary icon that creates a destination for people of all ages and abilities - enhancing community life, promoting civic transformation, and fostering dreams for the community and visitors alike.