



Urban Nature Lab

2018 Midterm Report

Team Leaders:

Nicole Pepper

Ricardo Patlan

Team Members:

Abir Hossain

Alison Chi

Brooke Shimasaki

Cali Nguyen

James Javelosa

Stakeholder:

Cully Norby

Abstract

The Urban Nature Laboratory Team is working towards the revitalization of Sage Hill/Boneyard for mixed-use purposes. Our primary contribution to this effort will be to draft a comprehensive report detailing optimal management strategies for the site and providing a vision for what mixed-use adaptations could look like. All of our energy and research will be focused on informing this report. As of now, we have completed the first phase, which was to conduct pointed interviews of key actors on campus - faculty, administrators, and students who have a stake in the Sage Hill/Boneyard space - to gauge interest levels and perception. The next two phases are to conduct surveys, based on our pointed interviews, within the general student population and outreach for best practices analysis. It is our aim to complete these two faces

Objectives

- 1) Collaborate with the UCLA community and administration to construct a shared vision for the redevelopment of our study site: “the Boneyard” into a mixed-use space.
- 2) Research best practices for the development and management of a native reserve and research/recreation site in urban spaces similar to our study site, Sage Hill.
- 3) Propose an informed plan (based on objectives 1 & 2) for the redevelopment of ‘the Boneyard’ into a mixed-use space that showcases Sage Hill’s biodiverse habitat, facilitates healthy campus initiatives and recreation for the UCLA

community, and simultaneously fosters respect for the Sage Hill site and other natural spaces in general.

Intro

The 2018 Urban Nature Laboratory team is one of the newest teams introduced by the SAR program, and we are building upon and expanding the work of previous SAR teams that were assigned the Sage Hill space to work with for their projects. Sage Hill is a 4-acre plot of undeveloped, naturally thriving land on the UCLA campus. It hosts the highest diversity of native California species on campus and remains the only natural area remaining on not only the UCLA campus but in all of West Los Angeles south of Sunset Boulevard. Although only a small portion of UCLA students, staff, and faculty are aware of Sage Hill, it is a vital part of the campus and crucial to the history and identity of Los Angeles. Thousands of years ago, the site was home to megafauna and in more recent times because of the success of native species the site is becoming a model of what it used to look like: native Californian vegetation characterized by grasslands with oak woodlands. The site was also used by Los Angeles' predecessors, the native Tongva tribe who utilized the native oak trees, laurel sumac, and elderberry present at the site. As development took place in the surrounding areas, many of the native species were affected and most were lost at the site.

A majority of the past projects focused on Sage Hill and the preservation, restoration, and observation of biodiversity through in-field work and active restoration. Our team's mission is unique in the sense that we are focusing primarily on only one portion of Sage Hill, but even so, because of the proximity of these two areas to one another they are ultimately interconnected and

thus both are incorporated into the scope of our project. The existing issues that necessitated the creation of our team to address these problems are primarily regarding the usage of the northernmost portion of Sage Hill which is colloquially known as “The Boneyard”- a rundown site that was once purposed as a storage facility for construction materials. There is much debate concerning the area, whether it should be used to develop more UCLA Housing units for students or whether the space should be revitalized to match the same level of restoration work that is taking place at Sage Hill. Our team’s vision is to improve upon the fact that The Boneyard space is currently underused and not respected. UCLA is one of the top public universities in the world and yet we are one of the only UCs that does not have a nature reserve; it is time for UCLA administration to be progressive in its approach and our team’s work will involve putting forth a creative design for a mixed-use space at the site that will be used for educational and recreational purposes. This design will be created after receiving input from various institutions, facilities, faculty, staff, and students to identify potential and preferred uses.

The Urban Nature Laboratory Team has divided its team into two sub-teams to make this process more efficient: the On-Campus team which will be dealing with professors and organizations on UCLA’s campus, and the Off-Campus team which will be researching relevant case-studies and communicating with individuals from such projects to gain insight on how to approach our own project. The Off-Campus team did research on other places that have done similar projects and we’ve selected a select few that we feel pertain best to our project and we will use the following sites listed as our case-studies: UCSC Younger Lagoon Reserve, UCSC Arboretum, Cal Poly SLO Leaning Pine Arboretum, UCI Ecological Preserve, UCSB North Campus Open-Space Restoration project, Golden Gate National Recreation Area- Crissy Field

Center (Presidio), and Crystal Cove Conservancy North Beach Restoration. In the next few sections we will elaborate on the methods employed this quarter and the challenges we have faced thus far.

Methods

The goal of our research is to collaborate with the UCLA community and administration to develop an implementable plan that will renew the “Boneyard” into a multi-use space that showcases the area’s biodiversity while simultaneously facilitating recreational and educational use. Our team shares a vision alongside the current Sage Hill Task Force to develop the area into one that supports the integrity of its biodiversity, facilitates related education and research practices, and simultaneously supports UCLA’s healthy campus initiatives by providing a green space that encourages mindfulness and meditation practices.

To accomplish this, our team will perform a combination of case-study based and in-field research. The On-Campus team is responsible for conducting research related to bridging the campus vision for the space. This team’s methods will include key informant interviews and campus wide surveys. Likewise, the Off-Campus team is supervising research relating to “best practices” for an integrated natural, recreational, and education space in urban environments. The Off-Campus team will research case studies to assess management and design practices that would be most appropriate for the Sage Hill space based on similar nature reserves. In addition, this team will be conducting interviews with some of these focus sites to inform our plan for administrative and management practices over the future site.

Key Informant Interviews

Our team conducted key informant interviews with UCLA faculty and students who are directly involved with Sage Hill to develop a survey that is both realistic and aligned with the goals of the space's future users. We selected representatives across various sectors of UCLA based on their past or current experience with Sage Hill. To select representatives for our key informant interviews our team worked alongside our stakeholder, Cully Nordby, to identify a diverse assortment of key groups that have historically used this space or are representative of those who will use or manage the space in future. Our representatives include graduate and undergraduate students, professors, administrators, and employees from the adjacent Krieger Day Care Center and university Residential Halls.

These key informant interviews gathered the visions of our participating interviewees on their concepts for the space regarding programming and facilities that would be needed to support such programs. These interviews consisted of a 25 minute discussion guided by 10 pointed questions (see Appendix). The interview begins by providing our participants with a background on our team, our mission, and why we are reaching out to them. This then follows into more probing questions to establish how familiar the interviewees are with Sage Hill and the Boneyard and, additionally to encourage them to feel more comfortable with sharing their true opinion with the team. We then presented the interviewee with an aerial map of the space. If the participant was not well familiar with either of the sites, we would further elaborate on their significance. Our next questions delve deeper into discussing the interviewee's opinions or ideas, such as, what programs or activities they would like to see happening at the Boneyard. Next we give them the opportunity to explain their fear or safety concerns involving the introduction of a mixed-use space followed by a brainstorming to meet such problems with possible solutions. We

then provided the interviewees with the opportunity to draw their ideas and features onto an outline map of the Boneyard. The purpose of this is to have them actively engage with the space by envisioning with a possible design. We then conclude the discussion with the chance for our interviewees to present any other remaining questions or comments that they have about our mission or the future of the space. The structure of our interview questions are meant to have a balance of creativity while addressing realistic, logistic, and administrative concerns.

The key informant process is currently underway. We have completed the primary interviews with three key informants and are scheduled to speak with at least three more informants. Our interviews, thus far, have been with two professors representatives and one undergraduate student. Our key informants have expressed interest in introducing programming including: related class visits, research, recreation, guided nature walks, studying, meditation, yoga, and other mindfulness practices. To facilitate such activities our informants have requested facilities including seating, ground padding, a compost toilet, an established nature trail, interpretive signage, tables, an amphitheatre or ‘teaching’ space, and a cleared space for yoga classes or meditative practices. These facilities and programming would also require the introduction and implementation of related facilities management procedures.

We have noticed a common theme between the three interviews that we have completed thus far. The three interviewees all shared a similar sentiment : how can we create a space that promotes a sense of community, care, and respect for Sage Hill and the Boneyard. Ideas such as having a “Sage Hill Ranger” (see Appendix) or even considering the design itself can have a big impact on how the community interacts with the space. Our interview with Bob Bilder, a professor under the Psychology Department, really helped us widen our own thoughts and

perception of our project. He suggested that we think about how design can instill a sense of care and respect from the community, meaning how can we design this space that subconsciously makes people want to care for Sage Hill and the Boneyard.

UCLA Community-Wide Survey

Our team will use the results from our key informant interviews to guide our composite campus survey for the community vision. The reason why we are using our key informant interviews to point to our generalized survey is to ensure that our community survey is both informed and pragmatic. The results from our discussions with our key informants or ‘complementary stakeholders’ demonstrate that there is a general disappointment in the lack of respect for Sage Hill and its native significance. Being so, our survey will question the broader UCLA community on their thoughts for programming and facilities that would promote a shared respect for the space. Our team will use two methods to share the survey: online supported and in-person supported. We will send out the survey along with background information with the site as well as host information sessions accompanied by the survey during various events throughout the Spring Quarter.

Assess Best Practices for Potential Mixed-Use Space

The Off-Campus team’s main objective is to research and reach out to other institutions that house spaces similar to ours for best practices analysis. We are approaching this in two phases. Firstly, we have begun developing a list of places to focus our research on, with the goal of roughly 15 locations. To guide our process we are following a set list of criteria: CA, owned/operated by, and adjacent to, a University/College. The ideal space is smaller in size and right next to a college campus. The Off Campus team will be compiling a sub-report for all of

the locations we select - detailing the space specifications, a summary of key observations, and key actors - to inform the final report on best practices. The second phase is outreach. While searching for locations to study we are also putting together a set of questions for the site staff or management in order to fulfill our outreach component. It is our hope that we can schedule a few over the phone or in person interviews to fill any voids in our research. The questions we are putting together are being designed to get as much insight on site management strategies as possible - including enforcement of rules, accessibility, time limitations, and maintenance to list a few. Hopefully our research coupled with our outreach component will provide our team with a well informed and comprehensive best practices analysis. This will all go towards the final report we will be presenting to key actors on campus.

Challenges

For years it has been a fight and huge effort to preserve Sage Hill, let alone make any administrative efforts for improvement. Being so, one of the central issues that our team has faced is adjusting our project to fit a realistic scope and timeline. We believe that the Sage Hill and Boneyard sites have great potential, but to reach such it must be utilized in a manner that reflects its significance, so, our task was to develop a project that will create an informed plan to design the space into one that facilitates respect for its biodiversity while simultaneously supporting both environmental and mental health initiatives as aligned with the interest UCLA community's. This goal, still carries a large scope, but to meet such our team set goals and developed a timeline to ensure that reaching it is realistic across our frame of two quarters. This project to develop Sage Hill and the Boneyard into a function space will take years, so, our team had to come to terms with the fact that, by spring quarter, we will not bring about a lot of

physical change to the area. In contrast, our approach revolves around creating a strong foundation for future development of Sage Hill by conducting extensive interviews with various UCLA departments as well as consulting other organizations that have created similar multi-use spaces.

Another issue that our team is currently facing is the changing in administrative personale. Following this academic school year, Steven Olsen plans to retire. Olson -- the Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer -- is the the Co-Chair of the Chancellor's Adversary Task Force on Sage Hill. Due to his influence position among UCLA Administration, Olson plays a pivotal role in moving our proposal forward. The Urban Nature Lab must work on our proposal in a timely fashion so that we can having the backing and support from Olsen prior to her looming departure.

Spring Quarter

Since the development of Sage Hill and the Boneyard would take years, producing a detailed plan would be infeasible for any one SAR team. This would have gone through UCLA's capital improvement process; entailing initial concepts, planning studies, and final design and construction. This large scope would have required a lot more effort on our part and that of the administration to meet those requirements in order to produce master plan. With more guidance from our stakeholder, the focus of the project shifted towards setting up a general plan on how the Boneyard would be used and subsequent logistics. Once the space was "completed," what would the site be used for and how would it be maintained. Our goal is still to designate it officially as mixed use space with the overall theme of environmentalism, education, and well

being. But now, instead of creating a hard plan, we will produce a report that explores the potential of the site and provides a framework of how the site would be enhanced.

By the end of spring quarter, we will present this report and accompanying schematics to UCLA Administration for approval. Our plan will include the history of the site, suggested improvements, and informed best-management practice guidelines for the potential future space. A key step to producing the report will be continued research and outreach to both the UCLA community and similar projects outside of the school. Some highlights of the quarter include; off-campus site visits for inspiration and advice on how the space could be designed and operated, and continued outreach to the student body and key informants on what they want. Lastly, we want to create a rough blueprint that defines the boundaries of the Boneyard, designates specific sections of the area, and showcases our vision for the site. All our information and research will be compiled and presented to the appropriate administrative personnel, in concurrence with the Advisory Task Force on Sage Hill's own report. These materials will be crucial to effectuate action from the UCLA administration to formalize the site as a mixed use space for future development.

Conclusion

While we are extremely excited about the direction of our project, there is still a lot of work and research to be done in the upcoming quarter. We are gathering information and studying how other schools integrate a mixed-use land space as well as figuring out a design that is accessible for everyone to use and enjoy while preserving Sage Hill as one of the last reserves of native vegetation in the state. There is a lot to consider and a lot to keep track of as we continue with our research.

Appendix

Citations: Intro- 2017 SAR Biodiversity Final Report

Professor Gillespie's Sage Hill Ranger Program (Uniform below)



The Boneyard



Key Informant Questions

Introduce a map of Sage Hill and the Boneyard (potential mixed use area)

What is your experience of Sage Hill and what do you think about the space?

From your perspective, if the area were to be developed for more access from the UCLA community what kind of activities or programming would you like to see there?

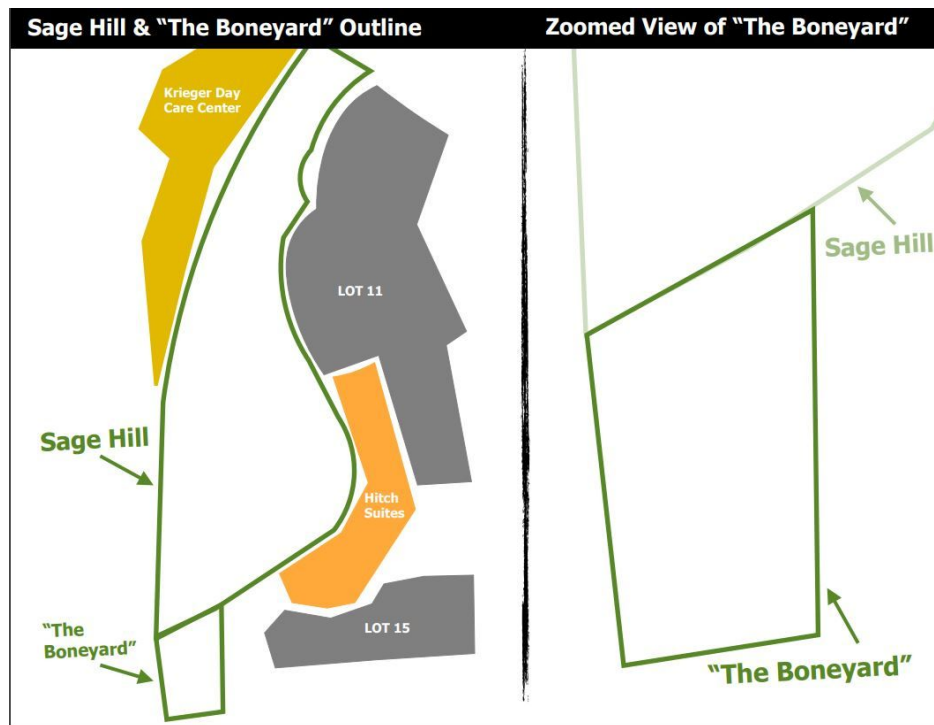
- a) How large of a group would you anticipate bringing?
- b) What kinds of features would be needed to facilitate this? (ex. Seating, bathrooms, storage)
- c) How frequently do you anticipate using this space?
- d) How does this space fit in with your goals as a _____ (professor, student etc.)

What would be the minimum level of improvements in design or management practices that would be necessary to facilitate your ideas?

On the other hand -- What would be your more grandiose or visionary ideas for this space?

e) Point back to Map & Drawing: *have an outline of sage hill + boneyard area and*

ask



them to do a brief sketch if appropriate

Concerns:

- f) What are your biggest concerns about increasing access and use of the area?
- g) Do you have any ideas on how this might be addressed?

Do you have any questions or final comments that you would like to make? Or is there anything that we didn't ask we should ask?