



Kent's

# CANYON OF CONNECTIONS

A Journey to the Future  
Through a Fully Realized  
Mill Creek Canyon  
Earthworks Park



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A Journey to the Future Through a Fully  
Realized Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park

## ABOUT

This graphic novel is a part of the City of Kent's Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan, which is the first step in a long-term reinvestment plan to support canyon improvements for Kent's growing and diverse community.

The story takes us through a future Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park where fictional characters experience the proposed park-wide improvements from the plan as built features. These proposed interventions focus on improving the regional and neighborhood connectivity, access and trails, park amenities, storm-water solutions, and natural resources.

The goal of the graphic novel is to communicate future design and planning possibilities for the canyon in a format that is accessible to the public and sparks community support for the next decade of park reinvestment.

## CREDITS

In collaboration with Kent Parks Planning and Development Staff;  
Story by Debra Guenther, Dakota Keene, Zoe Kasperzyk, & Charlie Able;  
Illustrations by Charlie Able.

Kent's Canyon of Connections was made possible by:

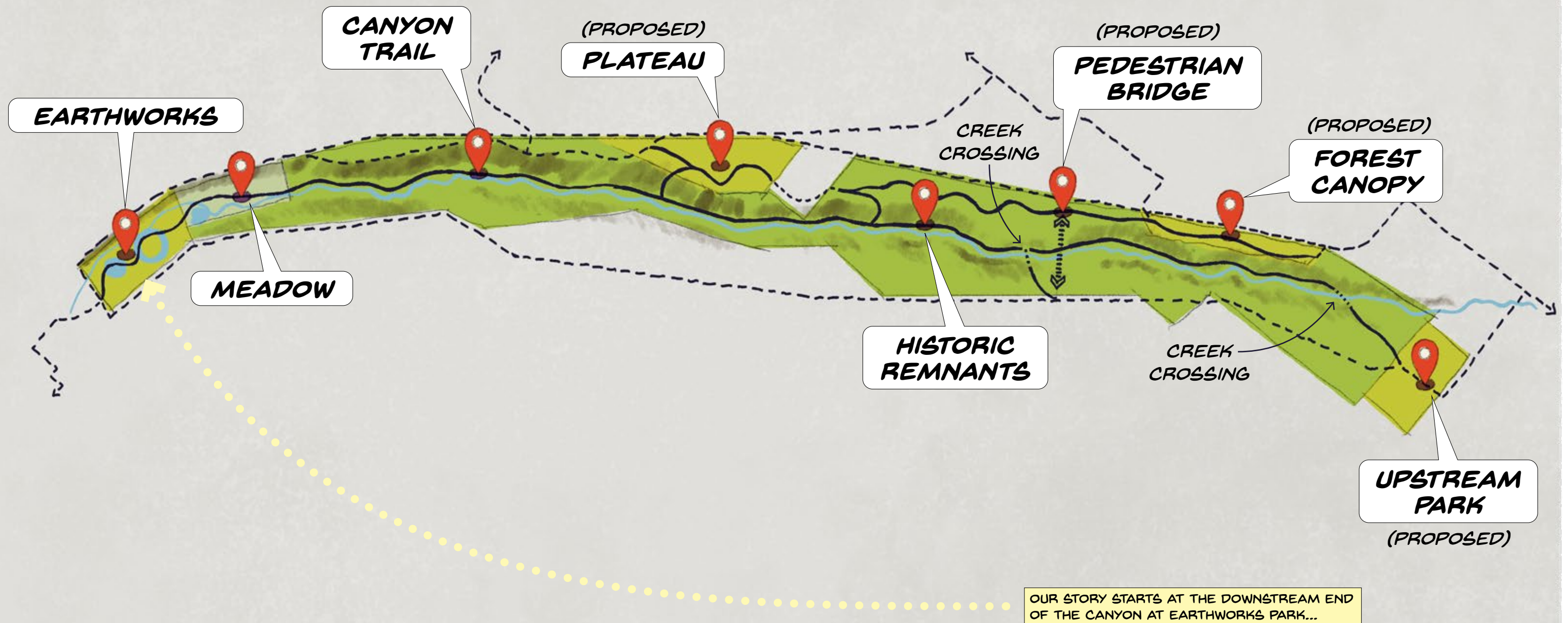


THIS IS A STORY ABOUT A BELOVED PLACE IN KENT, WASHINGTON...

YOU MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH EARTHWORKS, THE ICONIC LAND ART STORMWATER PARK, BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT MILL CREEK CANYON IS ALSO A PART OF THIS SAME PARK AND TRAIL SYSTEM?

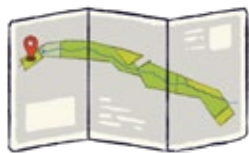
TOGETHER, THESE IMPORTANT PARKS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE A CHERISHED DESTINATION FOR BOTH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE, BUT THEY REQUIRE ESSENTIAL INVESTMENTS TO UNLOCK THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

THIS STORY GOES BEYOND OUR PRESENT DAY AND ENVISIONS WHAT THESE PARKS ASPIRE TO BE.



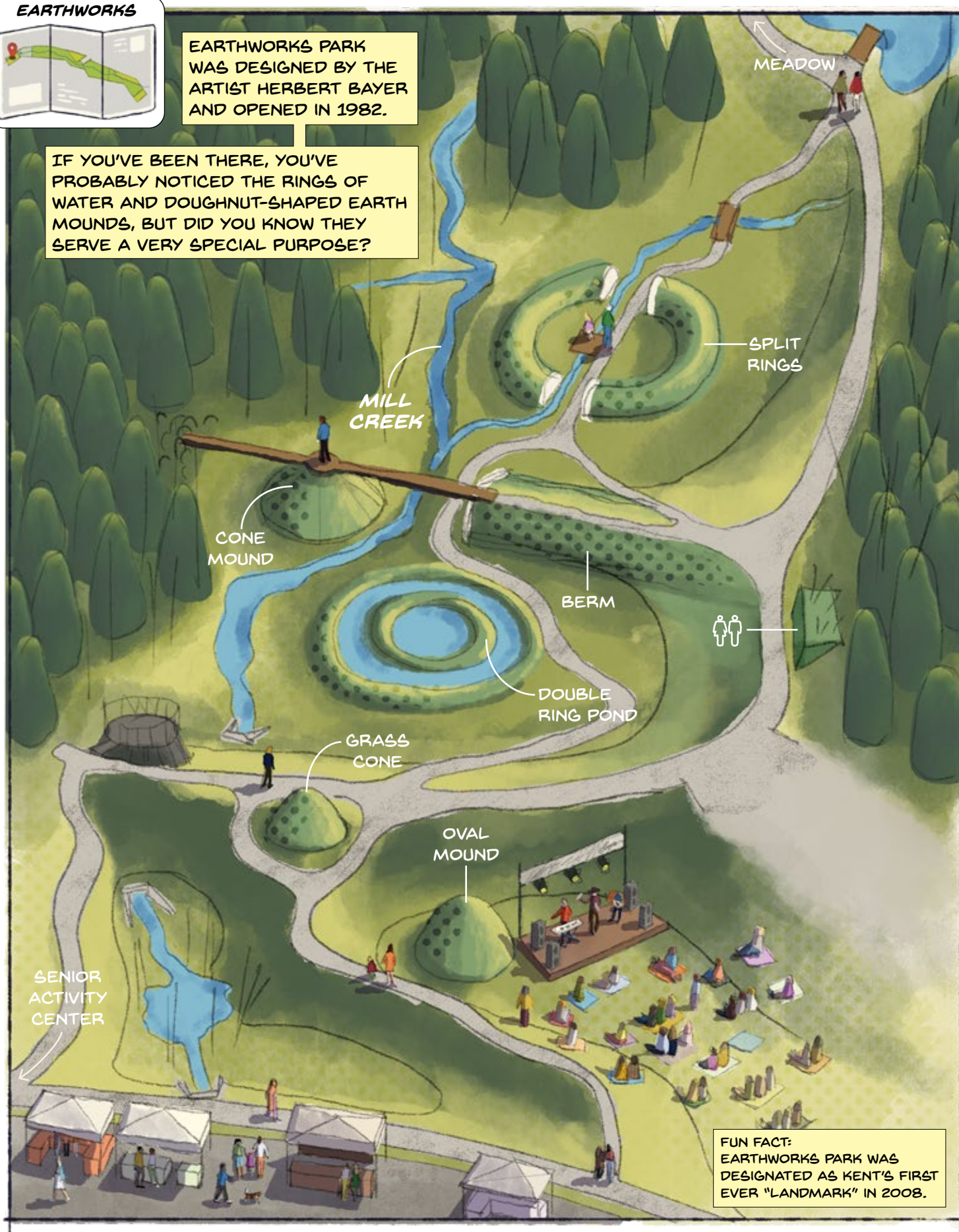


# EARTHWORKS



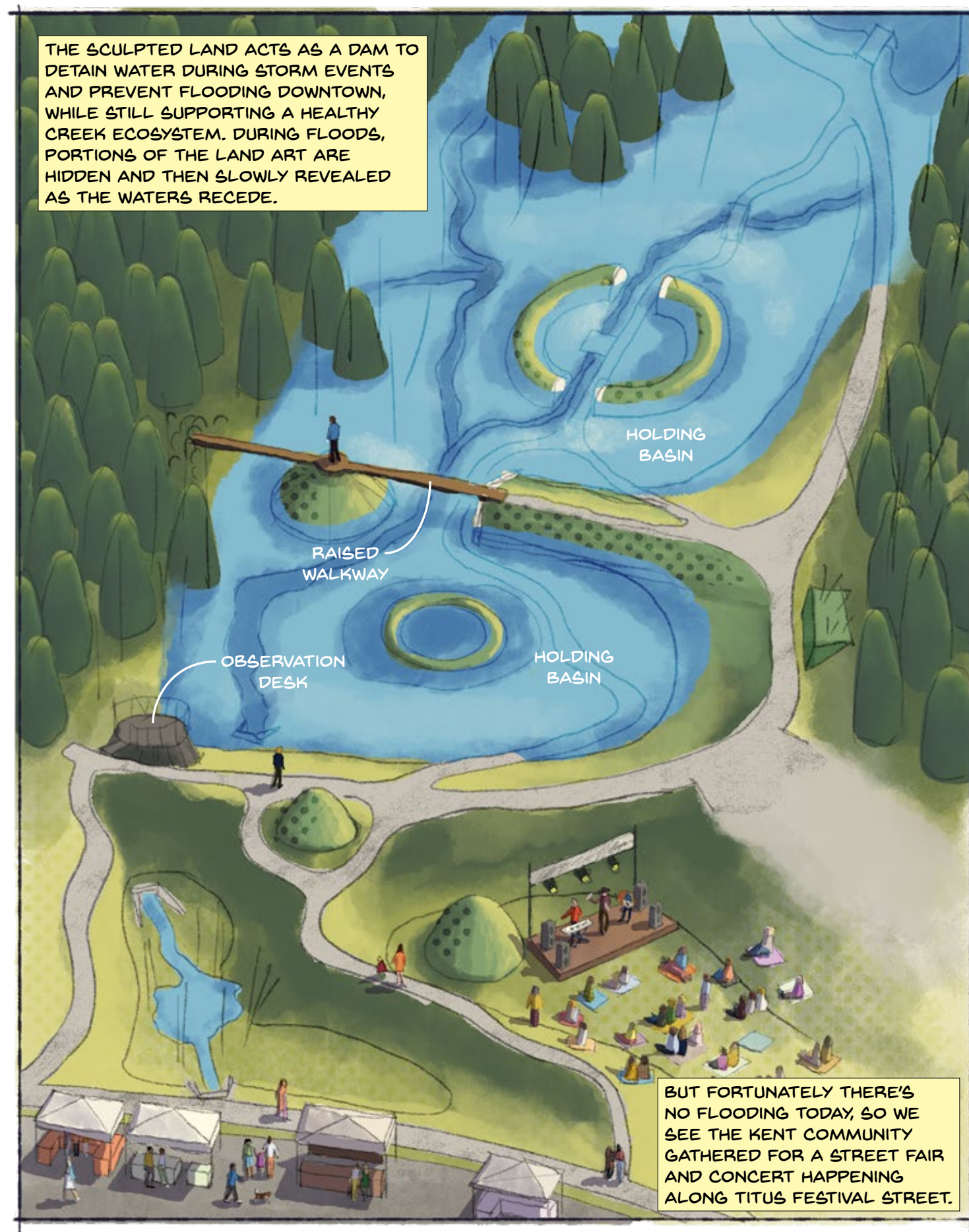
EARTHWORKS PARK WAS DESIGNED BY THE ARTIST HERBERT BAYER AND OPENED IN 1982.

IF YOU'VE BEEN THERE, YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED THE RINGS OF WATER AND DOUGHNUT-SHAPED EARTH MOUNDS, BUT DID YOU KNOW THEY SERVE A VERY SPECIAL PURPOSE?



FUN FACT: EARTHWORKS PARK WAS DESIGNATED AS KENT'S FIRST EVER "LANDMARK" IN 2008.

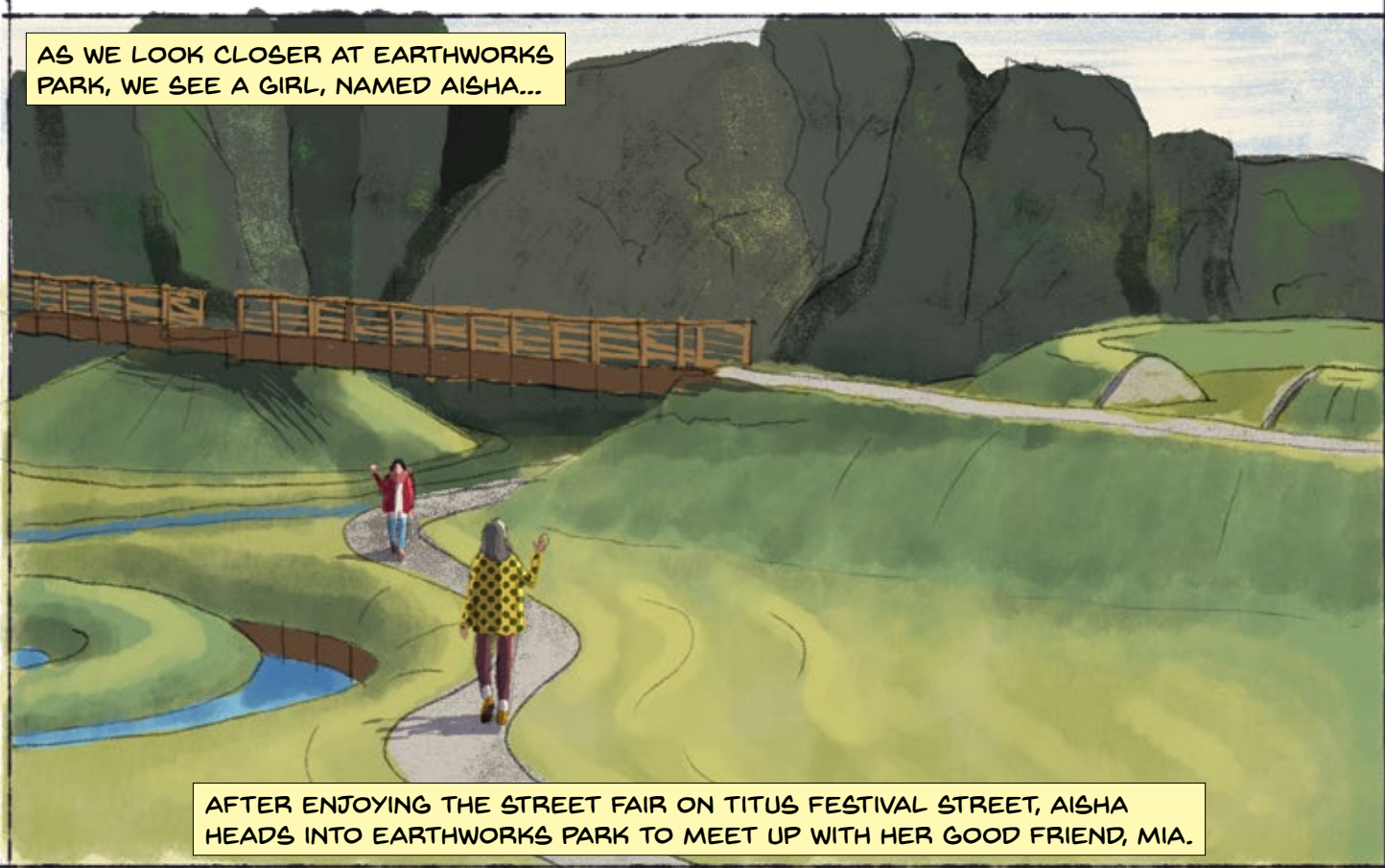
THE SCULPTED LAND ACTS AS A DAM TO DETAIN WATER DURING STORM EVENTS AND PREVENT FLOODING DOWNTOWN, WHILE STILL SUPPORTING A HEALTHY CREEK ECOSYSTEM. DURING FLOODS, PORTIONS OF THE LAND ART ARE HIDDEN AND THEN SLOWLY REVEALED AS THE WATERS RECEDE.



BUT FORTUNATELY THERE'S NO FLOODING TODAY, SO WE SEE THE KENT COMMUNITY GATHERED FOR A STREET FAIR AND CONCERT HAPPENING ALONG TITUS FESTIVAL STREET.



AS WE LOOK CLOSER AT EARTHWORKS PARK, WE SEE A GIRL, NAMED AISHA...



AFTER ENJOYING THE STREET FAIR ON TITUS FESTIVAL STREET, AISHA HEADS INTO EARTHWORKS PARK TO MEET UP WITH HER GOOD FRIEND, MIA.

HEY, AISHA!

HEY, MIA! GLAD YOU MADE IT!

YOU READY TO GO FOR A HIKE?

TOTALLY! I'VE BEEN LOOKING AT A COMPUTER ALL DAY SO I'M EXCITED TO BE OUTSIDE.

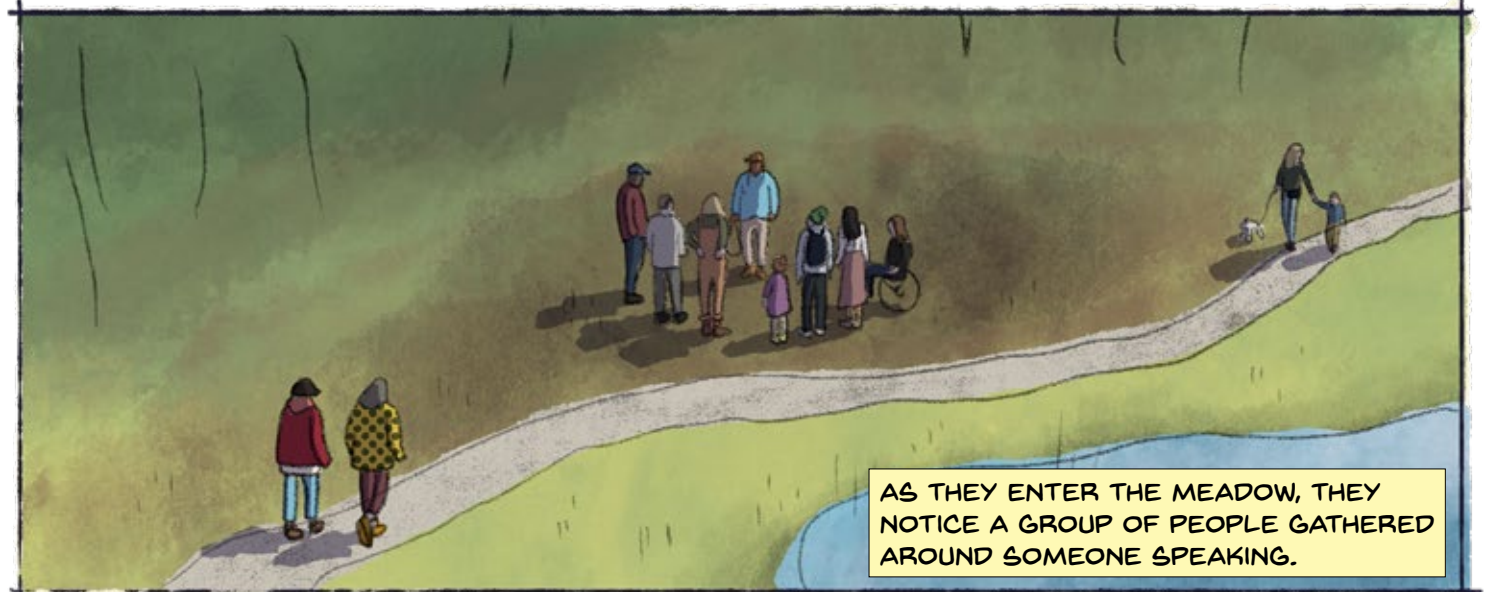
WELL, I'VE BEEN WANTING TO WALK THE FULL CANYON TRAIL.

WOULD YOU BE UP FOR THAT?

SURE! I HAVEN'T DONE THAT BEFORE SO LET'S GO FOR IT!



AISHA AND MIA BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY WALKING UPSTREAM THROUGH EARTHWORKS PARK.



AS THEY ENTER THE MEADOW, THEY NOTICE A GROUP OF PEOPLE GATHERED AROUND SOMEONE SPEAKING.





A GROUP OF PARK VOLUNTEERS IS WORKING WITH A PARK STEWARD IN THE MEADOW.

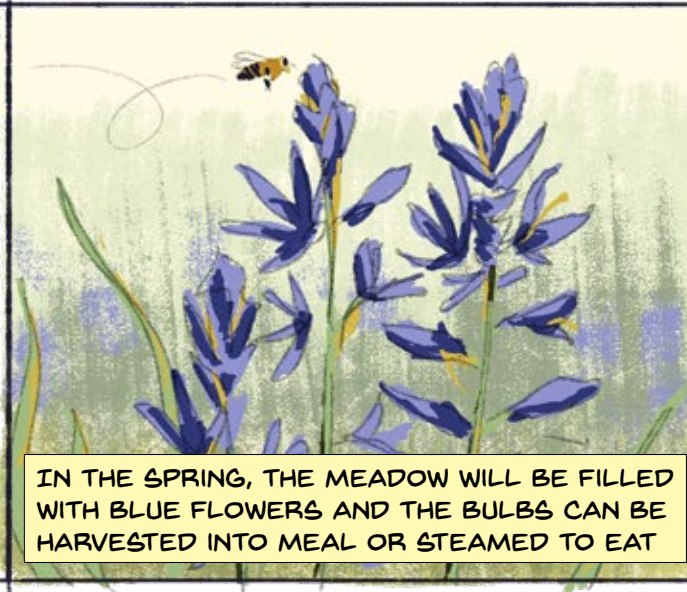
NATIVE MEADOWS, ONCE PLENTIFUL, HAVE BECOME A THREATENED HABITAT IN OUR REGION.

TODAY WE ARE GOING TO BE PLANTING A MEADOW.

WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE THESE NATIVE CAMAS SEEDS WHICH HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS OF INDIGENOUS SEEDKEEPERS.

BEFORE CONTACT WITH WHITE SETTLERS, INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES RELIED ON CAMAS ROOTS AS PART OF A COMPLEX DIET THAT CHANGED WITH THE SEASONS.

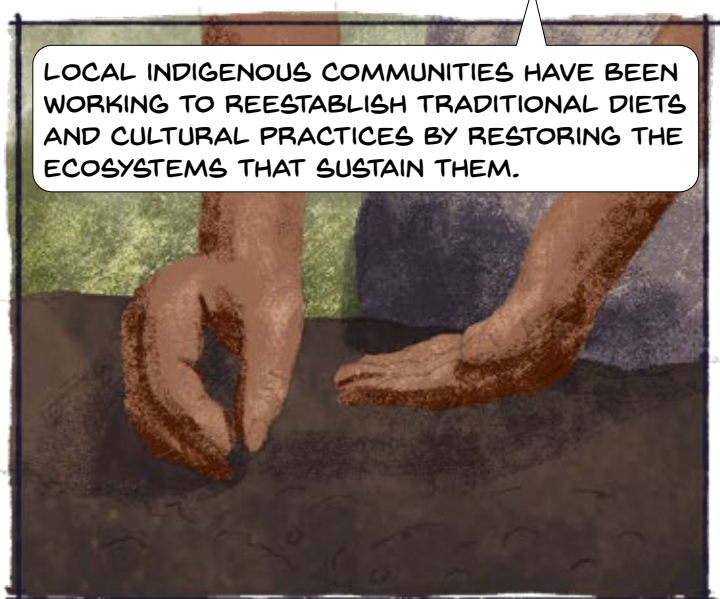
THE ROOT IS CONSIDERED A "FIRST FOOD" WHICH IS A TRADITIONAL STAPLE FOOD FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.



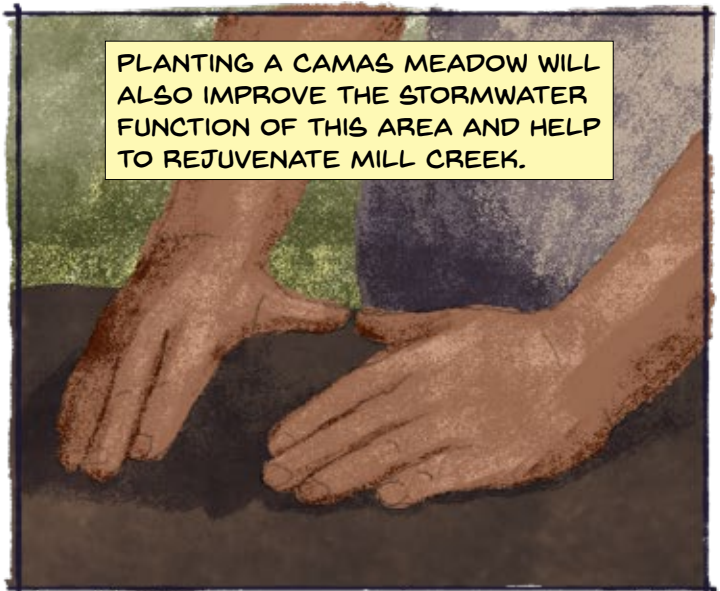
IN THE SPRING, THE MEADOW WILL BE FILLED WITH BLUE FLOWERS AND THE BULBS CAN BE HARVESTED INTO MEAL OR STEAMED TO EAT



WHEN COOKED, THE BULBS ARE SWEET, CREAMY, AND TASTE LIKE BAKED PEAR.



LOCAL INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN WORKING TO REESTABLISH TRADITIONAL DIETS AND CULTURAL PRACTICES BY RESTORING THE ECOSYSTEMS THAT SUSTAIN THEM.



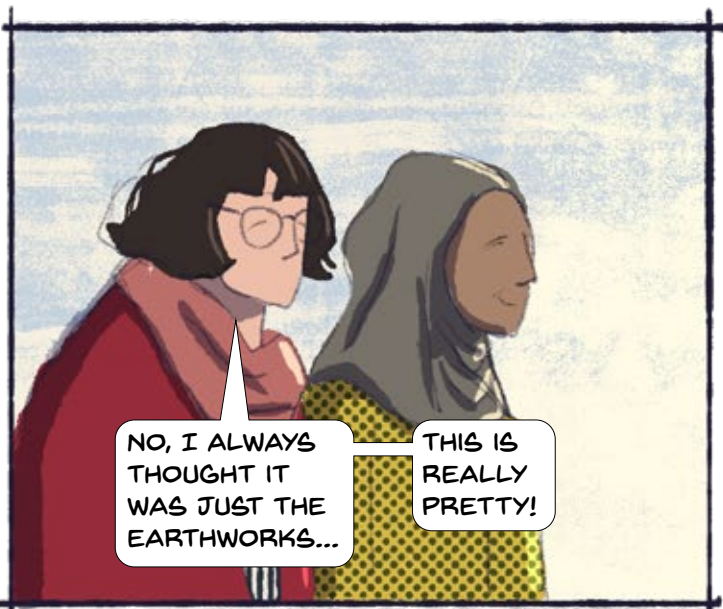
PLANTING A CAMAS MEADOW WILL ALSO IMPROVE THE STORMWATER FUNCTION OF THIS AREA AND HELP TO REJUVENATE MILL CREEK.





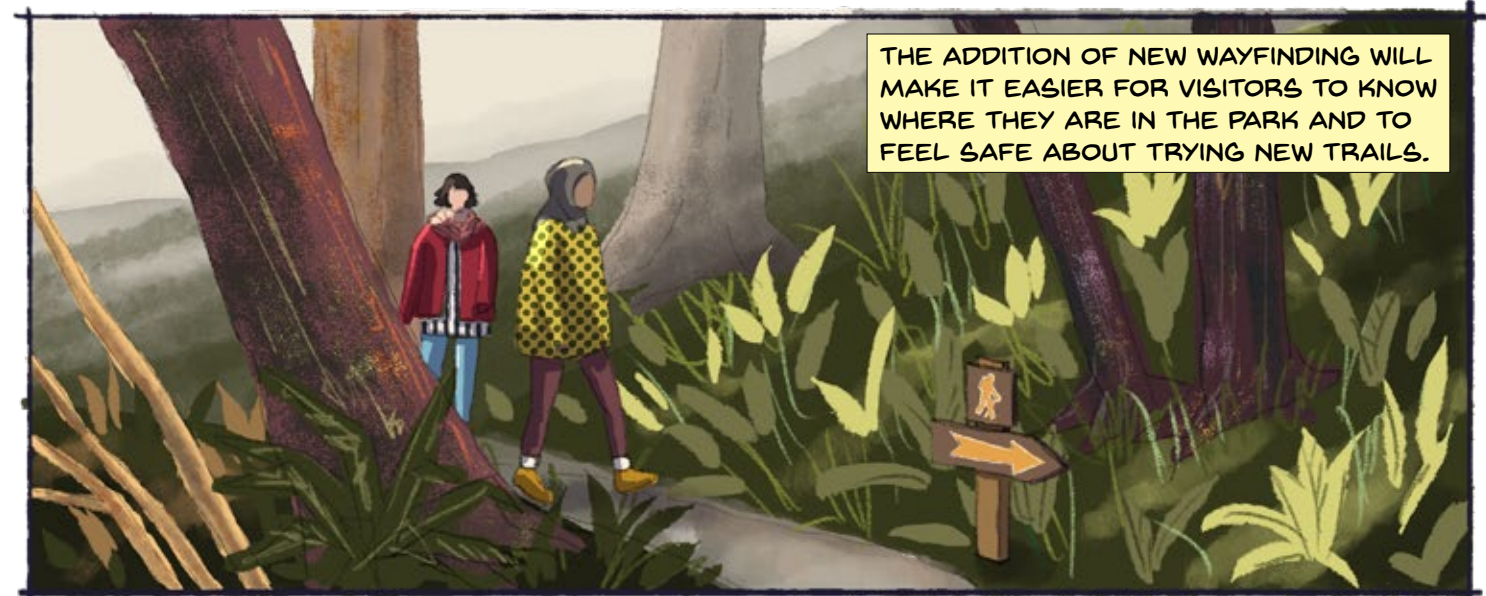


SO HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THIS PART OF THE PARK?



NO, I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THE EARTHWORKS...

THIS IS REALLY PRETTY!



THE ADDITION OF NEW WAYFINDING WILL MAKE IT EASIER FOR VISITORS TO KNOW WHERE THEY ARE IN THE PARK AND TO FEEL SAFE ABOUT TRYING NEW TRAILS.



OK, DON'T JUDGE ME, BUT MY MOM GOT ME ONE OF THOSE PLANT IDENTIFICATION GUIDES.

HE-HE!

NO, I LOVE IT! HAVE YOU FOUND ANYTHING ON THE LIST?



HMM, LET'S SEE...

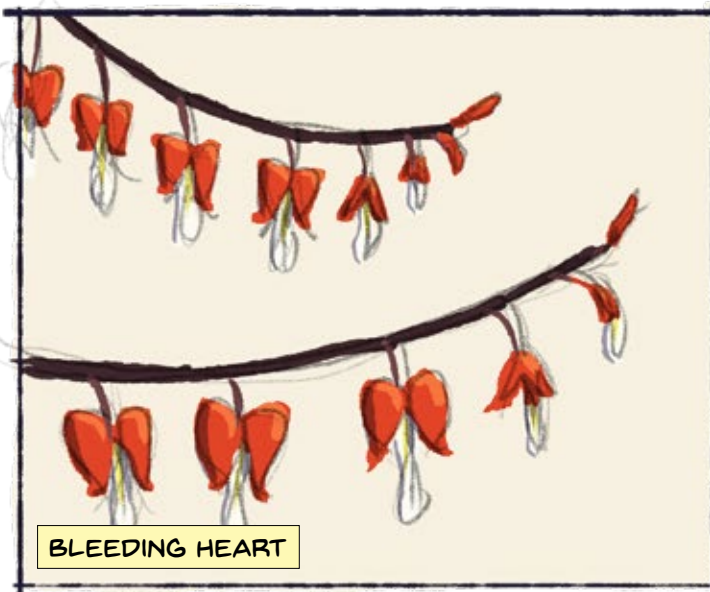




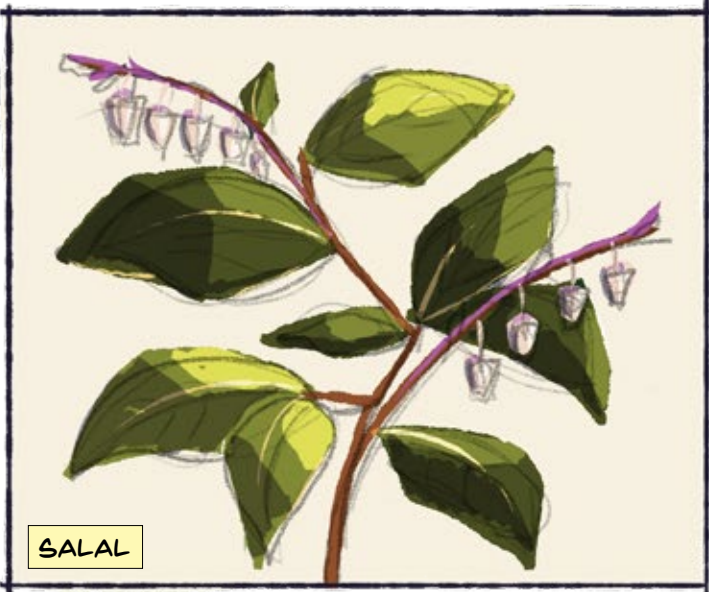
SWORD FERN



SALMONBERRY



BLEEDING HEART



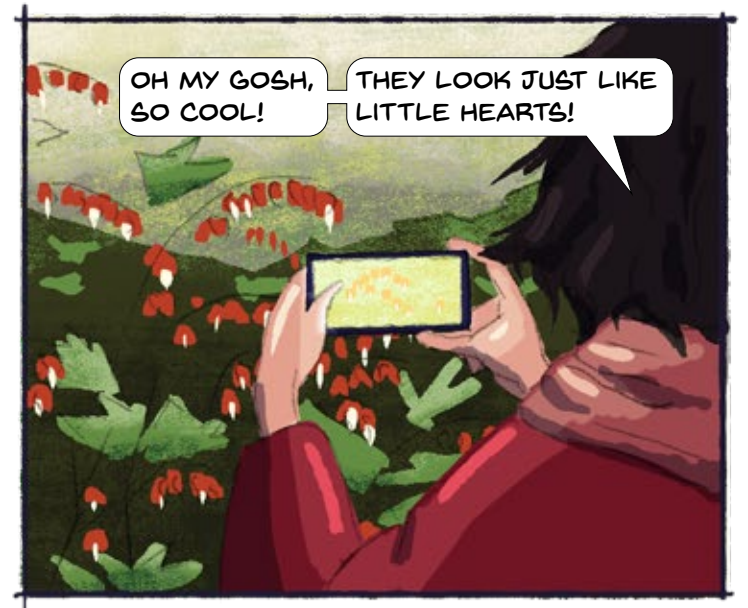
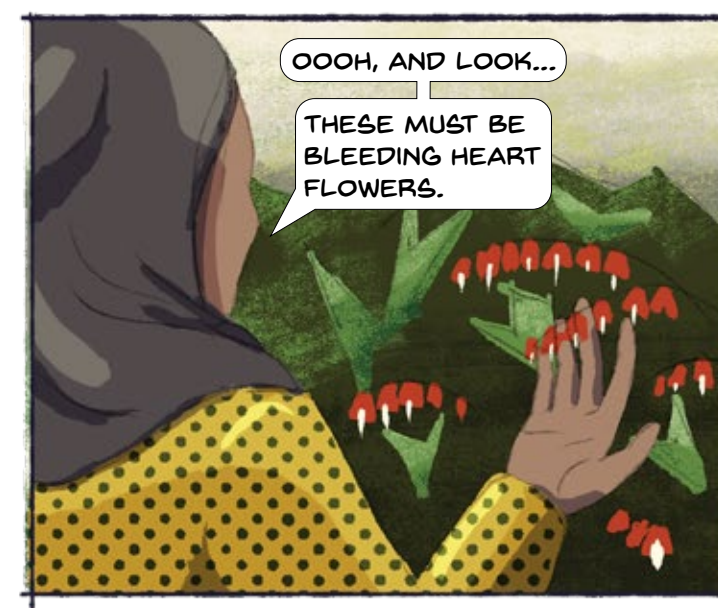
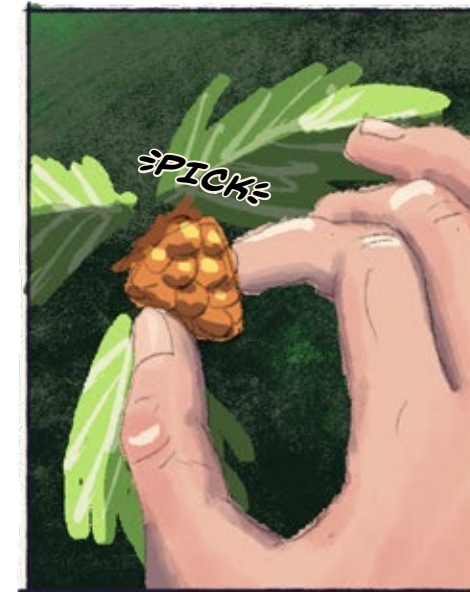
SALAL



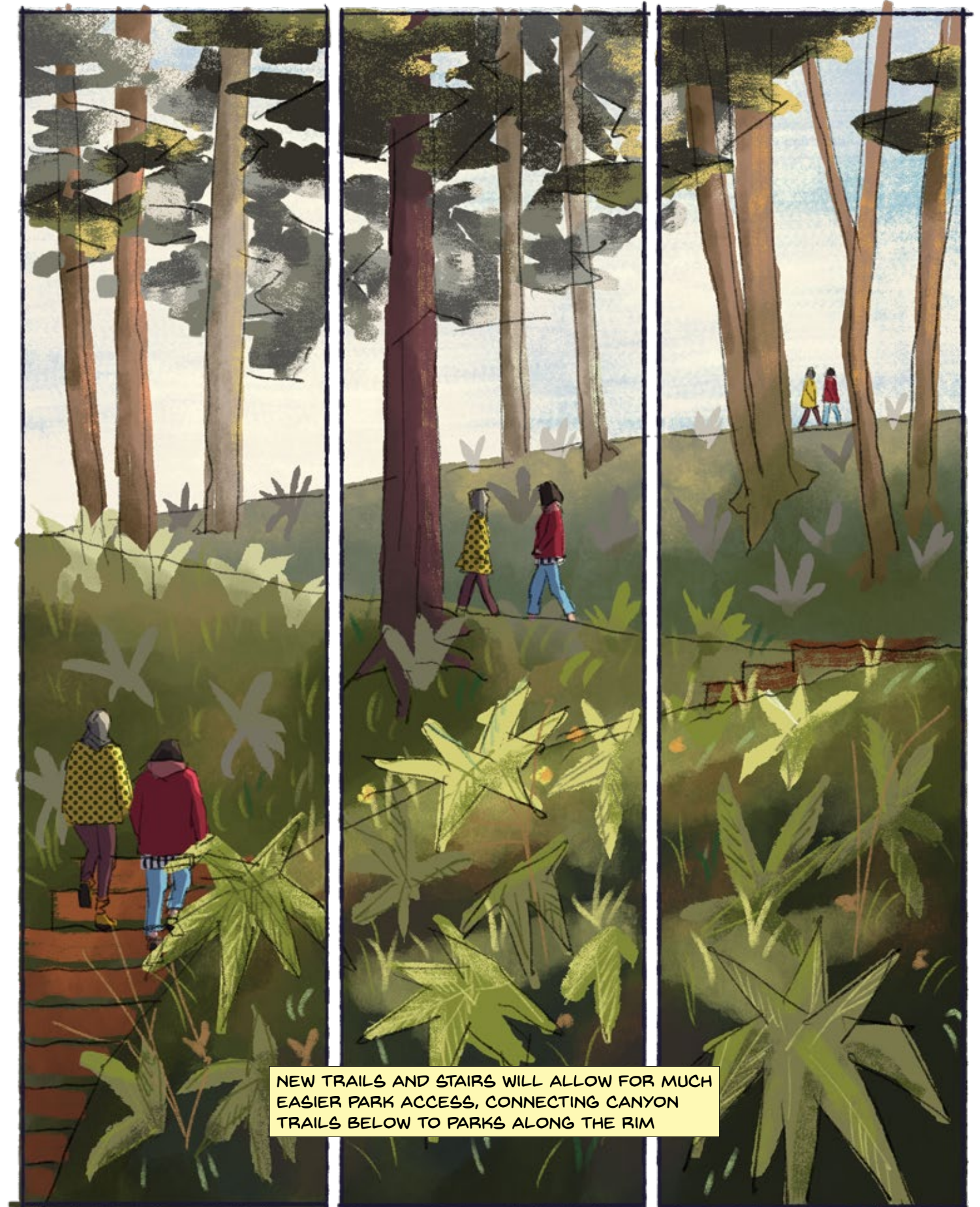
CHICKEN OF THE WOODS



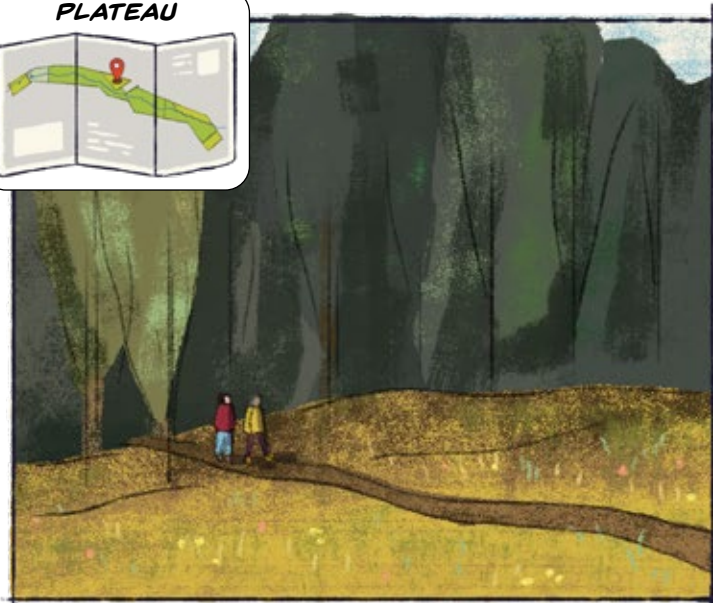
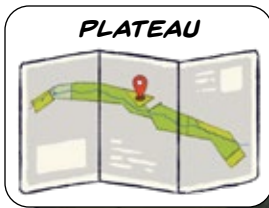
DOUGLAS FIR



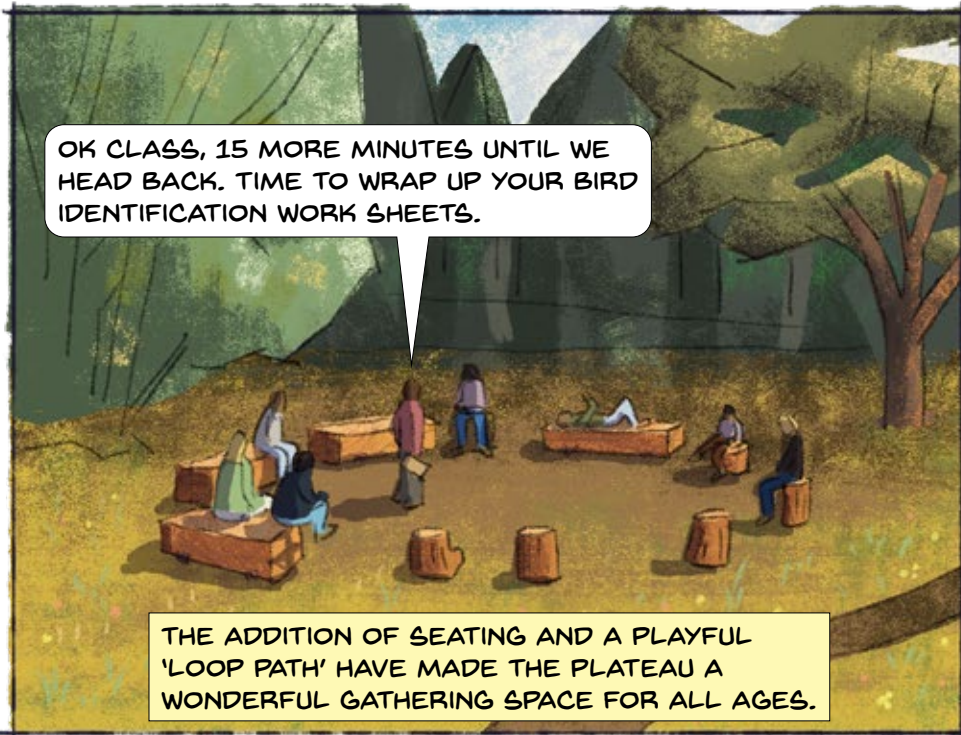








AS MIA AND AISHA ENTER THE PLATEAU, THEY SEE A LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS WITH THEIR TEACHER.

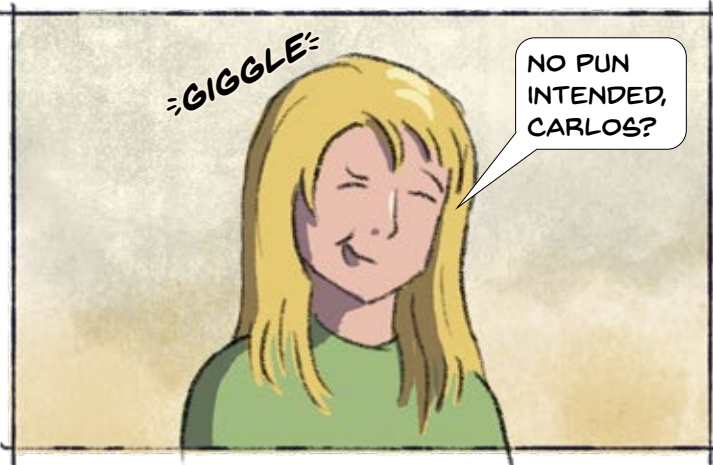


OK CLASS, 15 MORE MINUTES UNTIL WE HEAD BACK. TIME TO WRAP UP YOUR BIRD IDENTIFICATION WORK SHEETS.

THE ADDITION OF SEATING AND A PLAYFUL 'LOOP PATH' HAVE MADE THE PLATEAU A WONDERFUL GATHERING SPACE FOR ALL AGES.



ALREADY? THIS FIELD TRIP FLEW BY!



≡GIGGLE≡

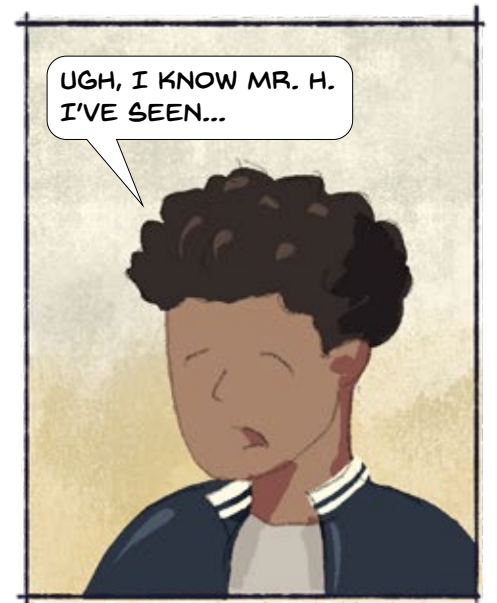
NO PUN INTENDED, CARLOS?



≡CHUCKLE≡



WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE IDENTIFIED ALL THE BIRDS ON YOUR SHEET BUT ONE...?



UGH, I KNOW MR. H. I'VE SEEN...



...THE NORTHERN FLICKER...



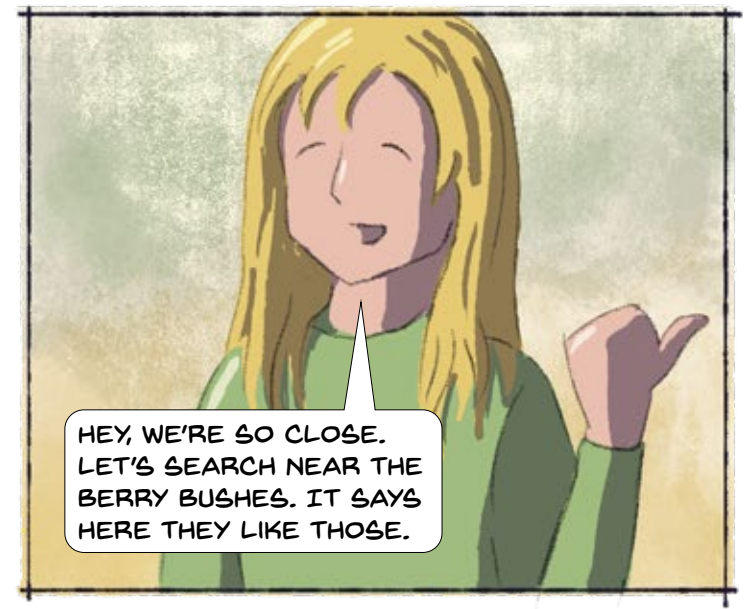
...A STELLER'S JAY...



...AND EVEN A PAIR OF HOUSE FINCHES...



BUT NO CEDAR WAXWING!



HEY, WE'RE SO CLOSE. LET'S SEARCH NEAR THE BERRY BUSHES. IT SAYS HERE THEY LIKE THOSE.





ABBY, LOOK!  
IN THAT TREE...

I THINK I SEE THE  
CEDAR WAXWING!



WOW, IT'S SO!  
BEAUTIFUL!

HABITAT RESTORATION WITH MORE NATIVE PLANTS WILL  
ENCOURAGE MORE WILDLIFE TO ENTER THE PARK.



ALRIGHT EVERYONE,  
IT'S TIME TO WRAP  
UP. MAKE SURE YOUR  
WORK SHEETS ARE  
COMPLETE.



LET'S GATHER NEAR  
THE ENTRANCE AND  
START WALKING BACK  
TO KENT MERIDIAN.



AS MIA AND AISHA CONTINUE THEIR HIKE  
THROUGH THE CANYON, THEY COME UPON  
A COUPLE HAVING A CONVERSATION.



HISTORIC REMNANTS



IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THIS AREA USED TO BE LOGGED.

MM-HMM.

THE TREES CERTAINLY HAVE GROWN BACK.

WELL SURE, BUT IT'S BEEN OVER 100 YEARS AND THESE NEW TREES STILL AREN'T AS BIG AS THEY ONCE WERE.

I MEAN, LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS STUMP!

IT EVEN HAS THE NOTCHES FROM WHEN THEY CUT IT DOWN.

OH YEAH, I LEARNED ABOUT THOSE ON A GUIDED HIKE WITH THE KENT HISTORIC SOCIETY.

IN THE 1800'S, LOGGERS WOULD CUT NOTCHES INTO THE TREE ABOVE THE BASE AND THEN WEDGE IN A WOOD PLANK, CALLED A "SPRINGBOARD", ON WHICH THEY STOOD TO CHOP AND SAW THE TREE DOWN.



IT'S STRANGE TO PICTURE SUCH A BIG LOGGING INDUSTRY HERE IN MILL CREEK CANYON...

AS MORE SETTLERS CAME TO THE AREA, MORE TIMBER WAS NEEDED FOR DEVELOPMENT. MILL CREEK CANYON PLAYED A CRITICAL PART IN THAT DEVELOPMENT.

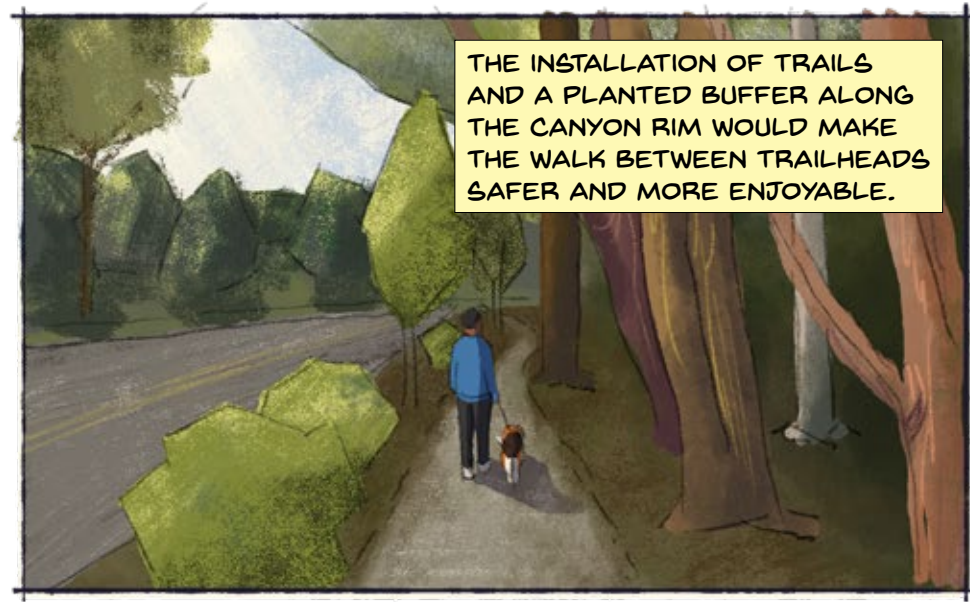
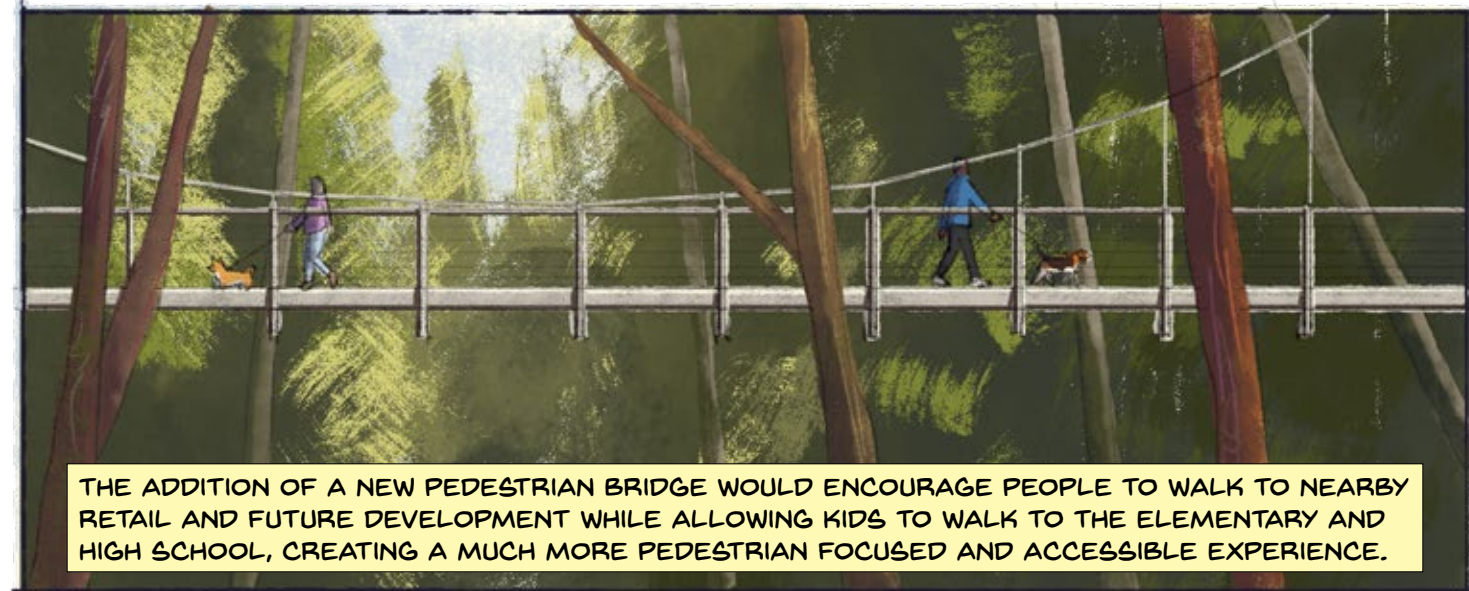
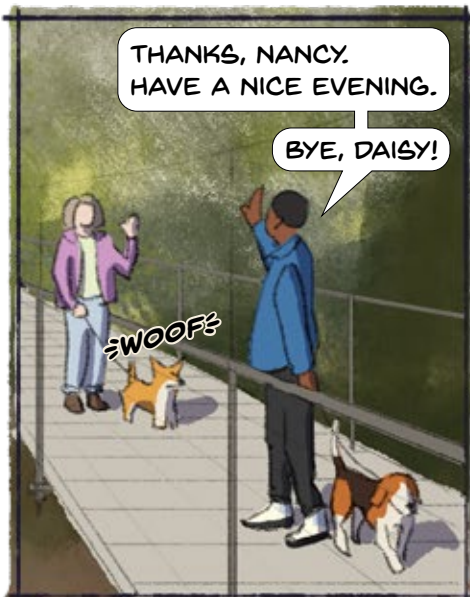
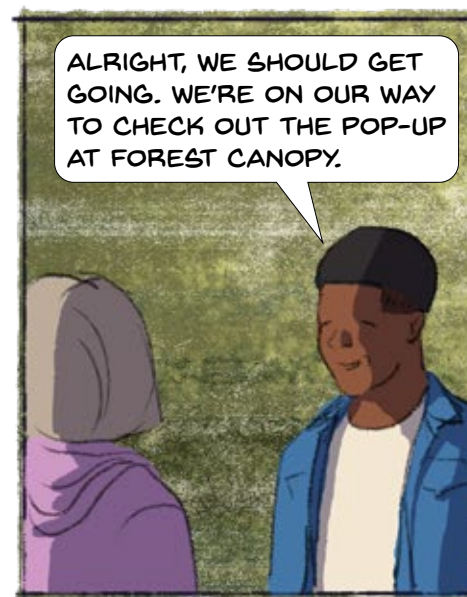
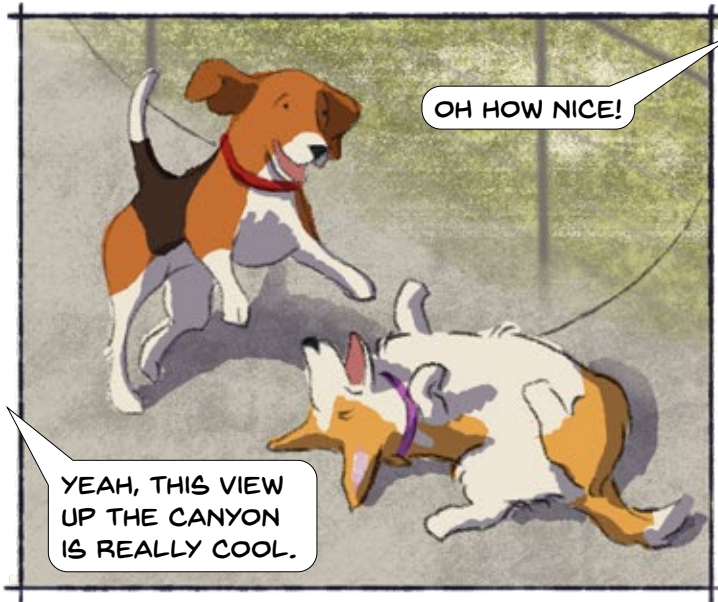
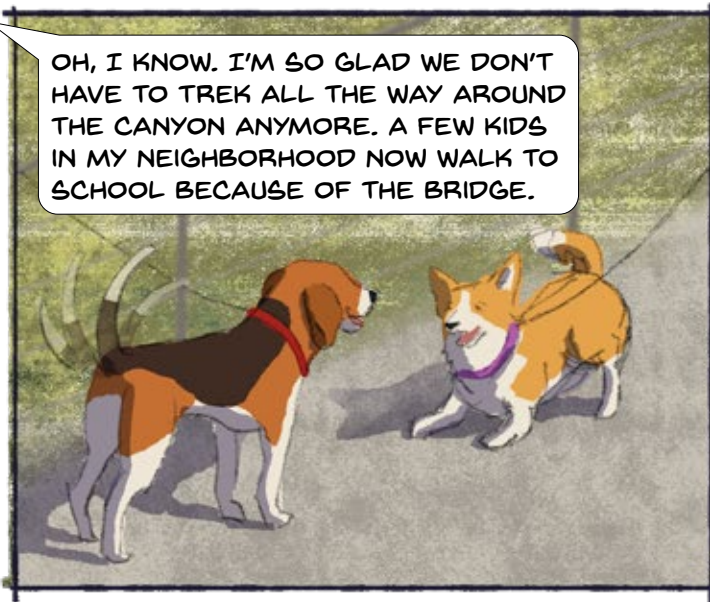
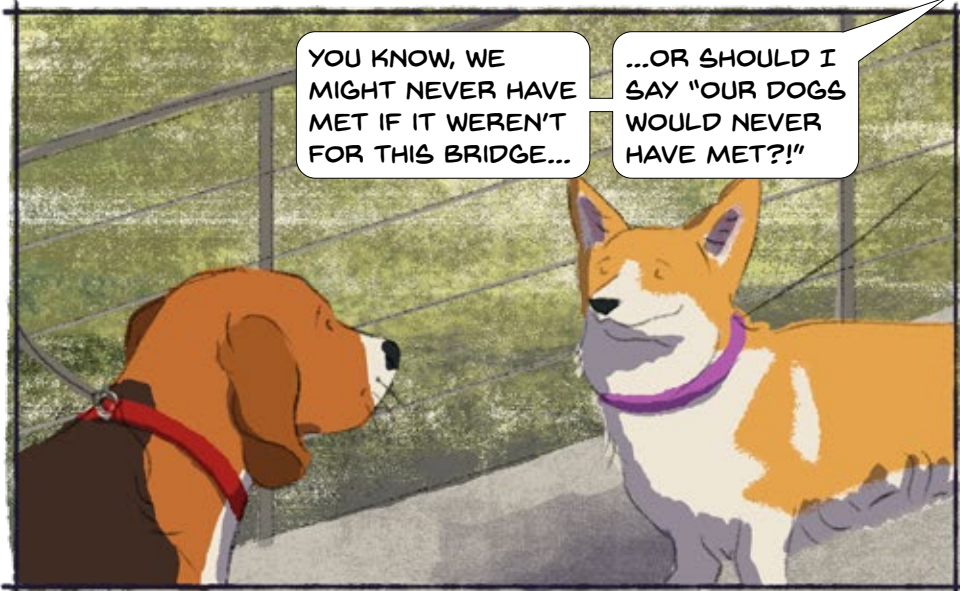
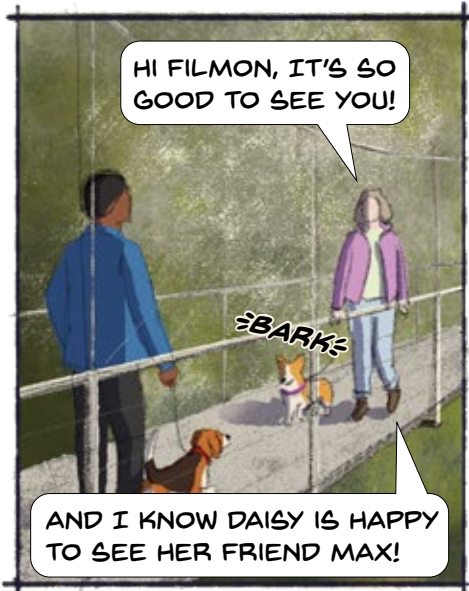
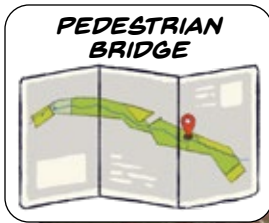
...BUT THERE ARE CLUES THAT LET YOU KNOW IT WAS HERE.

THE OLD DAM, NOW JUST MOSS-COVERED REMNANTS, USED TO CONTROL THE FLOW OF MILL CREEK TO TRANSPORT LOGS DOWN TO THE SAWMILL AT THE END OF THE CANYON.











FOREST CANOPY



AS FILMON AND MAX ENTER THE PARK, THEY ARE GREETED BY A PARK STEWARD.

HI, EVERYONE!



WELCOME TO FOREST CANOPY. WE'VE GOT A TON OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POP-UPS GOING ON TODAY...



WE HAVE FOOD TRUCKS...



...AND PLAY AREAS...



...A BIKE COURSE FOR KIDS...



...AND ART INSTALLATIONS...

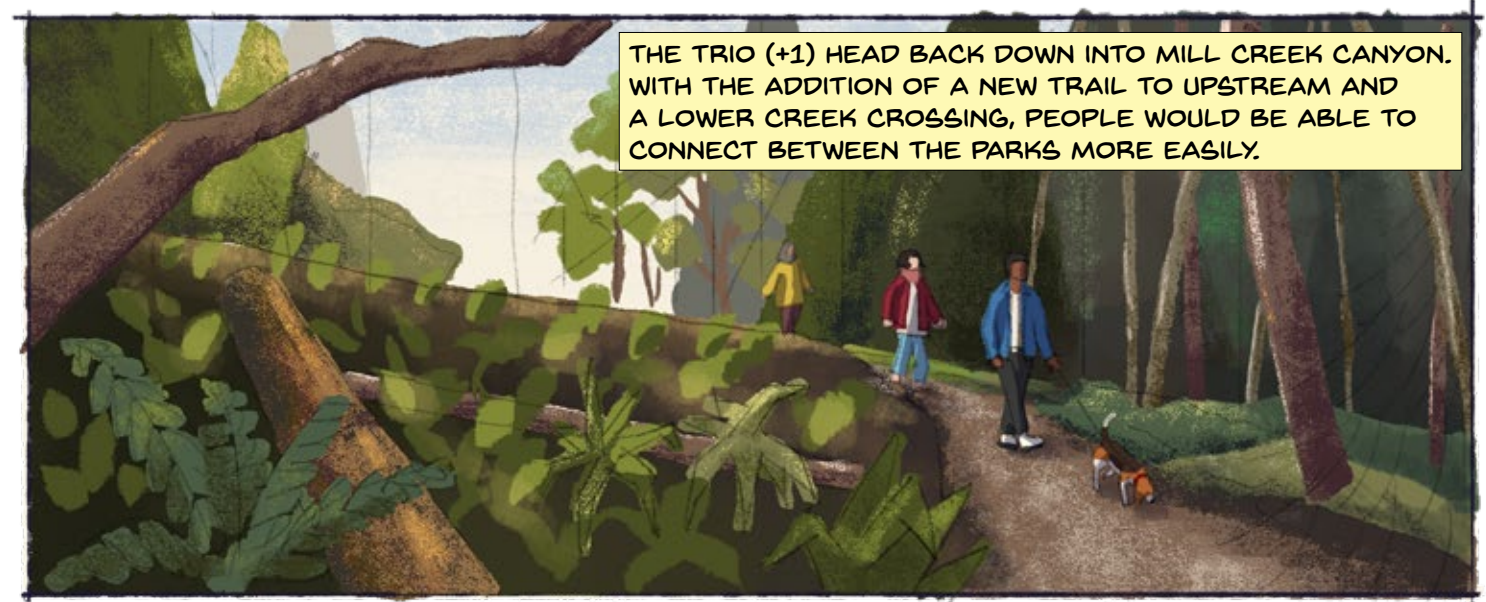


EVERYONE IS WELCOME, SO WE HOPE YOU HAVE A GREAT TIME!



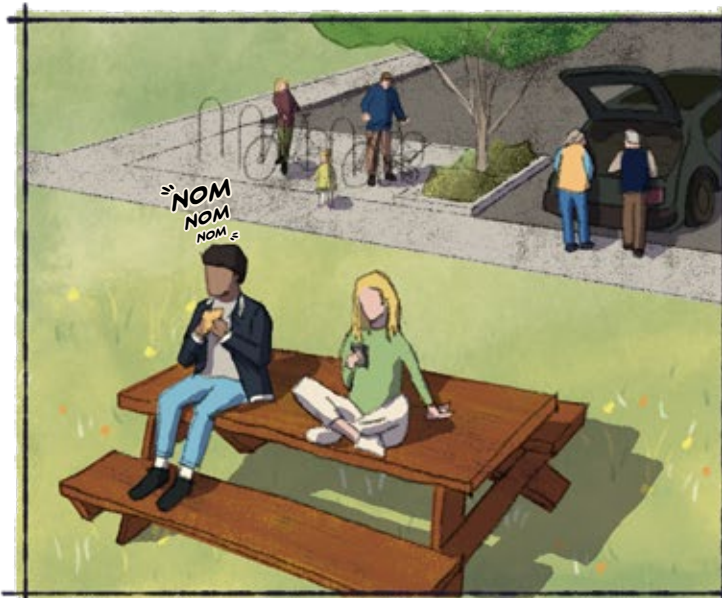
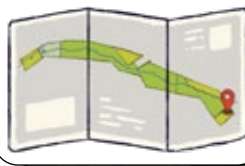
TRANSFORMING 100TH PL. INTO A PARK SPACE COULD BECOME AN AMAZING AMENITY, FOR THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF KENT.



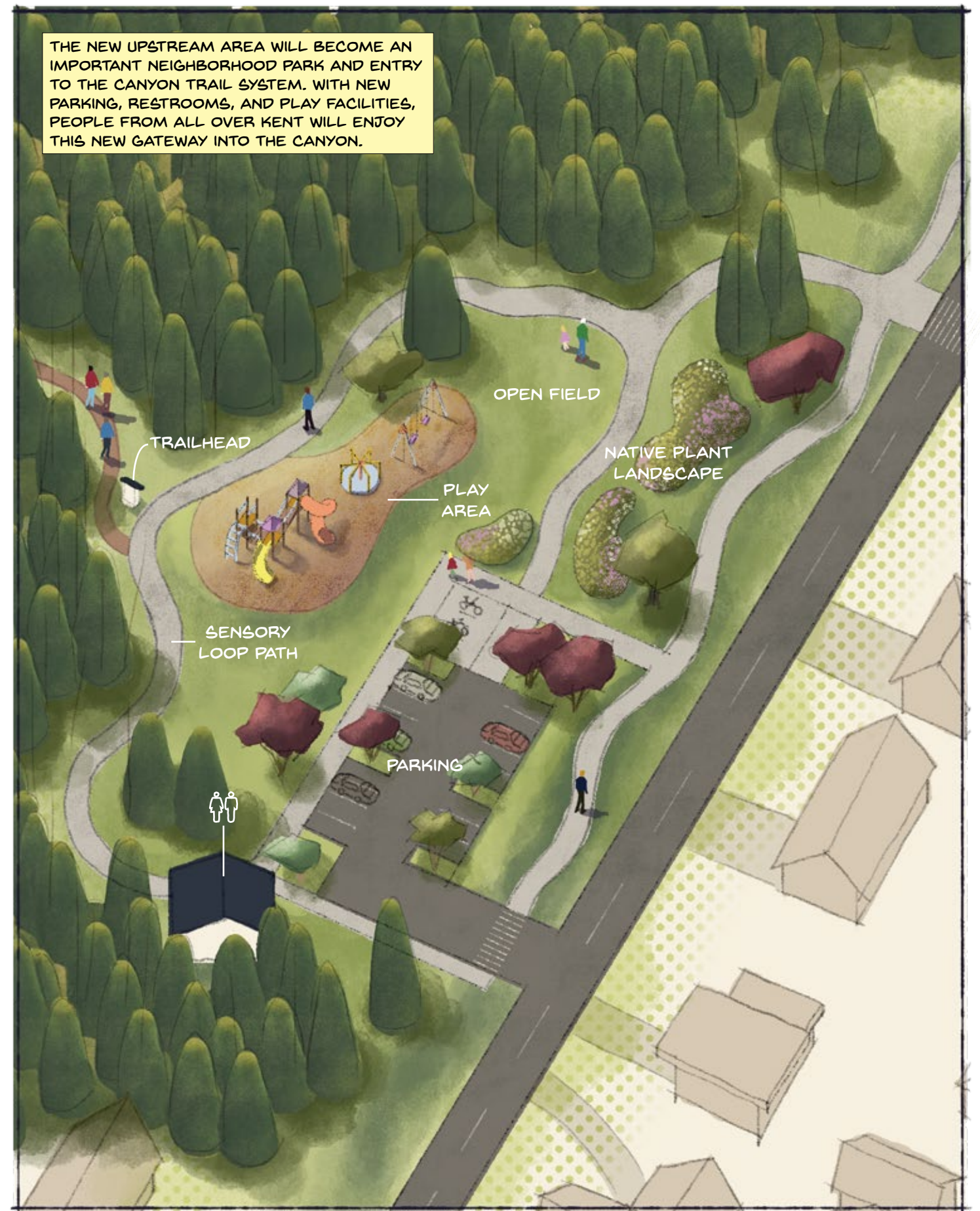




# UPSTREAM PARK



THE NEW UPSTREAM AREA WILL BECOME AN IMPORTANT NEIGHBORHOOD PARK AND ENTRY TO THE CANYON TRAIL SYSTEM. WITH NEW PARKING, RESTROOMS, AND PLAY FACILITIES, PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER KENT WILL ENJOY THIS NEW GATEWAY INTO THE CANYON.







ALRIGHT, IT'S GETTING LATE. I SHOULD PROBABLY HEAD HOME.



YEAH, ME TOO. THANKS SO MUCH FOR DOING THAT HIKE WITH ME.



ARE YOU KIDDING?! THAT WAS SO MUCH FUN!

LET ME KNOW WHENEVER YOU WANT TO HIKE THE CANYON AGAIN.

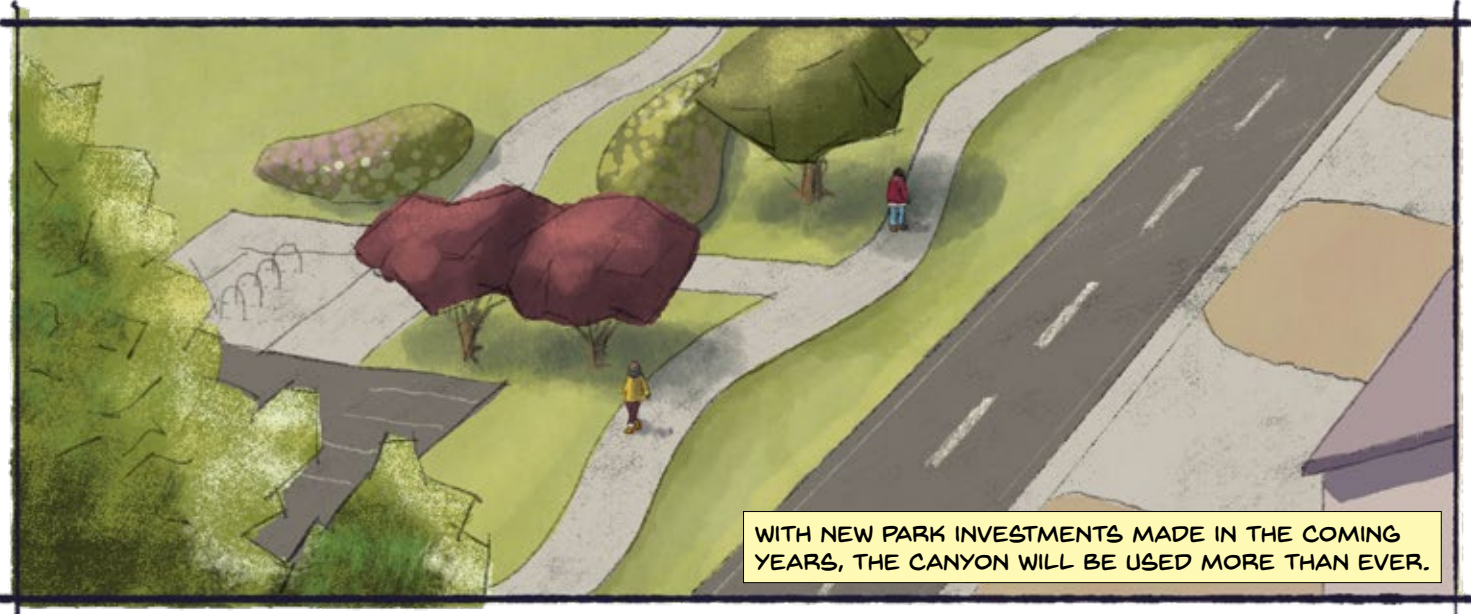
OK, I WILL!

=HUGS=

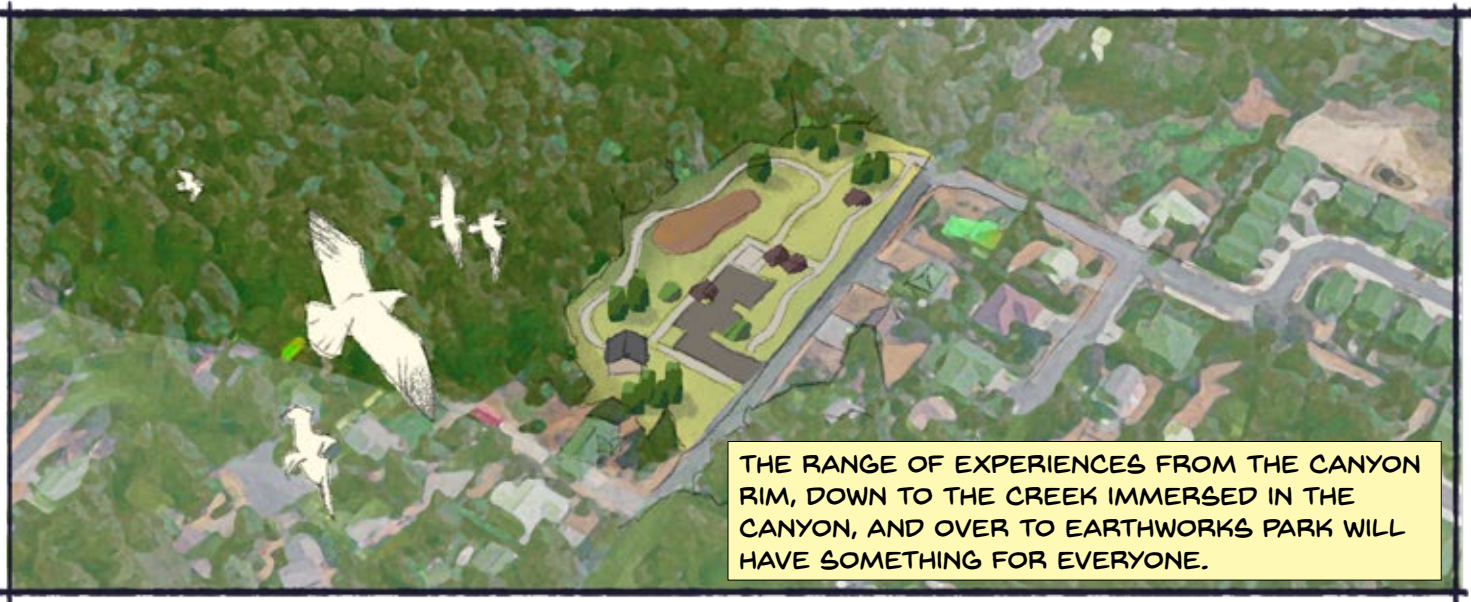


HAVE A GOOD NIGHT, AISHA!

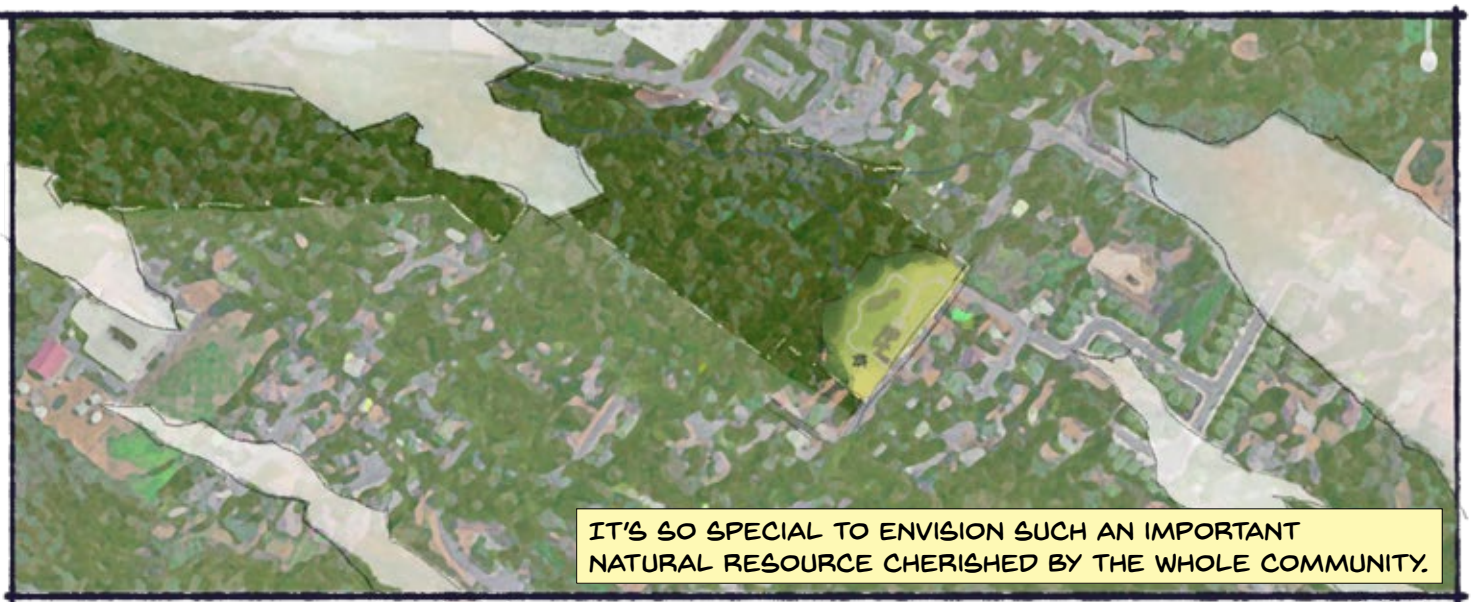
YOU TOO, MIA!



WITH NEW PARK INVESTMENTS MADE IN THE COMING YEARS, THE CANYON WILL BE USED MORE THAN EVER.



THE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES FROM THE CANYON RIM, DOWN TO THE CREEK IMMersed IN THE CANYON, AND OVER TO EARTHWORKS PARK WILL HAVE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.

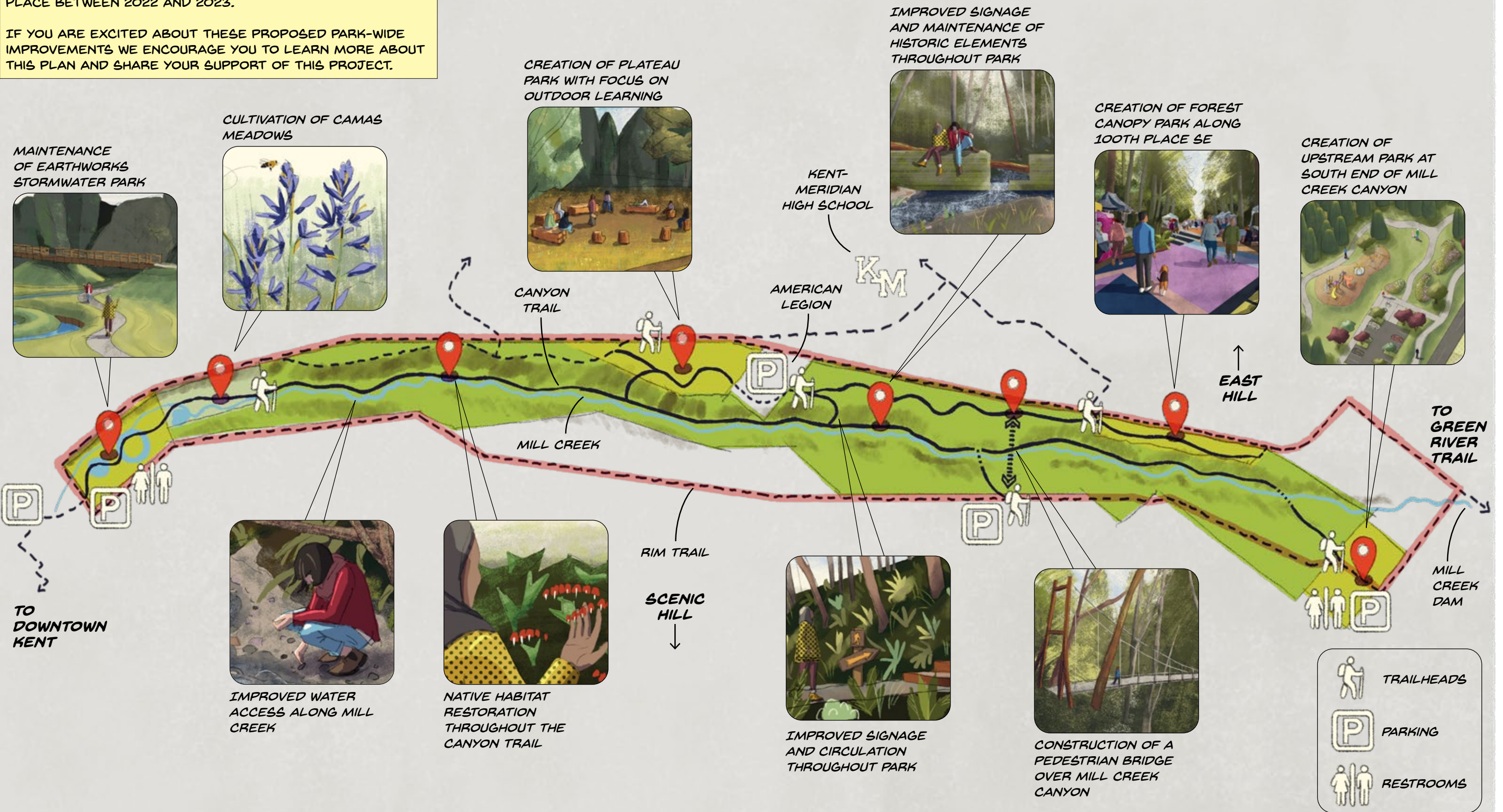


IT'S SO SPECIAL TO ENVISION SUCH AN IMPORTANT NATURAL RESOURCE CHERISHED BY THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.



THE BUILT FEATURES AND ACTIVATION EVENTS YOU SAW IN THE STORY ARE A REFLECTION OF FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC DURING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN 2022 AND 2023.

IF YOU ARE EXCITED ABOUT THESE PROPOSED PARK-WIDE IMPROVEMENTS WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PLAN AND SHARE YOUR SUPPORT OF THIS PROJECT.





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM THE AUTHORS

First thanks go to the Kent Parks, Recreation & Community Services Department for their vision and collaboration on this project.

Special thanks to Mithun for believing in the power of this project and supporting its development.

To the residents of Kent, we hope you enjoyed reading this story as much as we enjoyed creating it. This project is by, for, and about you.

## MORE INFO

Creating excitement and momentum by sharing the Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park Framework Plan and this graphic novel is an important early step in the long-term reinvestment process.

If you would like to learn more about the project, please scan the QR code below.







**KENT  
PARKS**

**MITHÜN**