The students of the UCLA Extension Landscape Architecture Program, in conjunction with the Student Chapter of the ASLA at UCLA, are pleased to submit our design in response to the City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works, Request for Designs, Median Design Competition.

Our median design is a modern take on a traditional bioswale and utilizes easily reproducible materials and processes, along with a contemporary plant palette featuring drought tolerant California native species. For design inspiration, our team looked to the local environment, and the fascinating juxtaposition of natural and urban space that defines our user experience in Los Angeles. This informed the overall concept of our median, which is a metaphor for water flowing from our local mountains, through the concrete “blocks” of the city, and finally to the sea. The “city blocks” in our design are constructed from pre-cast concrete blocks of different lengths and heights installed along the median longitudinal profile which create visual interest, and act as small dams to slow stormwater so it can percolate into the below grade retention system.

Stormwater storage and percolation is accomplished utilizing BOE standard materials for below grade retention system. Our plant palette includes California native species that are drought tolerant, require little irrigation and maintenance, and can tolerate periods of inundation during storm events. Our design is targeted toward the central/inner Los Angeles region and would also be suitable for inland valleys from a plant palette perspective. A safety strip of hardscape concrete is included for workers conducting periodic maintenance, and the plant palette allows for visual clearance above three feet ensuring driver safety. Finally, we have included a modern, cast concrete “placeholder” that can be individualized to demarcate the specific neighborhood where the median is located, providing opportunity for community pride and identification.