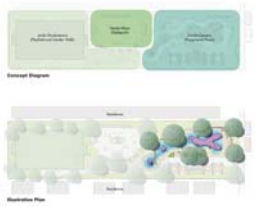
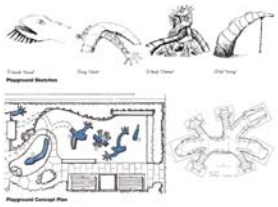
ASLA 2016 Quality of Life Design Awards ~ Image Summary: Benito Juarez Park



1. The plan and zone diagram help to illustrate the linear nature of this mid-block park. The Alejibre dragon and frogs dominate the zone closest to the street frontage drawing the neighborhood into the site with the exuberance of the tile-encrusted creatures.

2. The fully tiled dragon sculpture is a visual magnet. The paving and planters work in concert with the themes embedded in the dragon to create a composition that is even more interesting than the sum of its parts.

3. Rubber play surfacing in gradating bands of blue and sand helps to underscore the narrative that the dragon is partially submerged under the sea. One begins to understand the level of detail in the custom tile and revel in the complexity of its execution. It took a full year to tile…and it's a "wow"!



4. Early concepts led to the idea of a large dragon whose parts surfaced and resurfaced. Working with Cemrock, who crafted the concrete shell and Jolino Beserra, the tile artist, the concept was refined in a highly collaborative process.

5. The wonder and awe on the faces of children is worth all of the effort necessary to get this piece made. Exploring the inside, or thinking through details that aid in climbing up the dragon, creates sensory experiences and mastery that will hopefully lead to a lifetime of memories.

6. The interior of the dragon is a great place to feel safe and protected through myriad views to the surrounding park.

7. We manipulated the play surfacing to give the illusion the dragon is slightly under water in areas…thus making it appear even larger than the exposed sections.

8. Climbing, digging…play of all types…is encouraged in the park. The dragon is a springboard for imaginative play while the nearby sand play area reinforces that notion. The ceramics are largely recycled and reclaimed tile and dishware.

9. Plantings and stone choices were chosen to strengthen the ties to the Oaxacan region. Succulents and trees found in the region along with green boulders that mimic the indigenous green limestone of Oaxaca were chosen as artful touchstones to “home” embedded in the landscape of the park.

10. Near the entrance, a tile rug pays tribute to Oaxacan native son Benito Juarez. Juarez was a lawyer and five term president of Mexico who is renowned for resisting the French occupation of Mexico, overthrowing the Second Mexican Empire, restoring the Republic, and using liberal measures to modernize the country.