

SCCASLA application for Land and Water Reclamation and Conservation – Anaheim Coves, Anaheim California

Project Identity and location: Anaheim Coves is a 14 acre nature park and 1 ½ mile multi-use trail located on the west side of the Santa Ana River between Lincoln Avenue and Ball Road and overlooks the 116 acre Burris Basin groundwater recharge facility. The property is owned by the Orange County Water District (OCWD) and leased by the City of Anaheim for \$1 annually. At each end of the trail, a staging area includes restrooms, parking lots, bike racks, and drinking fountains (including dog waterers). A hitching post and water trough are provided for equestrians at the Lincoln Ave. staging area.

Purpose of Project: Anaheim Coves is a nature “oasis” in an urbanized desert. This public park has replaced a weed infested dirt parcel surrounded by barbwire with art, interpretive signs, and indigenous native plant material for public enjoyment and wildlife prosperity. The multi-use trail accommodates wheelchairs, walkers, joggers, families, equestrians, bicyclists, and dogs on leash.

Role of Landscape Architect: The project Landscape Architects were responsible for facilitating the extensive and ongoing community input process; securing and administrating grants that funded construction and plant establishment; master planning; approving construction documents; negotiating a 25 year lease for public use of the secured, inaccessible property; adjustments to the plans per landowner (OCWD) lease requirements; environmental compliance; authoring the project design and maintenance guidelines; interpretive signage; bidding; construction administration; and establishment of the native plant material. Consulting Landscape Architects were responsible for community input; incorporation of public preferred revisions to the master plan; art features; construction documents, design subconsultant coordination and construction observation.

Working within defined guidelines set forth by OCWD and the California Department of Fish and Game and neighbors concerns, the Landscape Architects developed a plan that exceeded all of the stakeholders’ expectations. They envisioned and transformed a forgotten, often misused, problem space into a unique community recreational and educational resource.

Significance: Upon entering Anaheim Coves, visitors immediately feel that they are in a special place. The amenities offer the public opportunities to reconnect with nature in an urban setting. The park features only California native plant material indigenous to the bioregion of the Santa Ana River Watershed, art and interpretive educational signs about the area, wildlife, local history and the importance of local water management. Also, this site takes advantage of views into the Burris Basin, a retention/percolation basin that features migratory and endangered birds throughout the year. Patrons are using the trail for exercise, bird watching and family time, as well as communing with nature. Many have admitted that they would not normally exercise outside, but now enjoy walking through the area daily.

At community meetings, approximately two hundred citizens experienced for themselves how Landscape Architects, through collaboration and consensus design, created a concept plan that incorporated their ideas and concerns. The concept plan that was presented by the Landscape Architects at the final community meeting resolved key issues and addressed the community’s concerns. As a result, the community began to envision the proposed enhancements and look forward to the day when the area would be open for their use. The community supported the use of locally native plant material to attract birds and insects, a permeable paved multi-use trail, staging areas at each major entrance, view overlooks, custom benches and interpretive signs. The transformation from a gated water district facility to a valued, public open space of local flora and fauna has proven that reclamation and conservation can significantly improve the quality of life and still maintain the functional requirements of water recharge. The park’s all day popularity and opportunity to greet neighbors in passing on the trail, have been exciting by-products from the day the park was opened.

The native landscape of the Anaheim Coves project not only enhances the viability of adjacent OCWD mitigation area, it provides an attractive opportunity to area residents to get outside and learn a bit more about the natural world around them.

Special Factors: Anaheim Coves is the first park project in Anaheim to incorporate permeable asphalt paving as the multi-use trail and parking lot surfacing. Security lighting at the park entries and gates is solar powered as is the interior lighting for the restrooms. Elevated overlooks were designed to allow a vantage above the OCWD mandatory fencing at the trail edge. Tubular steel fence panels incorporated metal cut-outs of site wildlife and plants while black wire mesh fencing was used to maximize trail views to the water. Anaheim Coves is a place where families, children, elderly and people of all economic levels come to commune with nature, relax, visit and exercise.