

PROJECT IDENTITY & LOCATION

Coastline Community College District, Newport Beach Learning Center –Newport Beach, CA

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

In a time where large swaths of land available to be developed into expansive campus master plans are increasingly less attainable, the challenge for community college districts is to provide the experience and amenities of a larger university on the available small plots of 'leftover' land in Southern California. Such was the case for Coastline Community College District, where the integrated design team worked in concert on the college's Newport Beach property to create a true campus character while blurring the line between site and building. The result is a unique campus experience with ties to the surrounding environment, through the 'borrowed scenery' of the adjacent nature preserve and Pacific Ocean vistas. The landscape and architecture work as one to offer a variety of learning/social spaces that tread lightly on the land.

The Newport Beach Center is a bold new expression of college campus and sustainability. The building and landscape transform the notion of 'campus' and 'architecture' while relating to the surrounding environment. The Center's focus is to highlight its connection to the community, environment, and site providing a true amenity for the district and public.

ROLE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

The goal was to engage students and promote collaboration, inspiration, and socialization as found on a larger campus. The college supports diverse educational programs and students, and as such, the site needed a diverse array of spaces. Nestled on the roof of the first story, at the heart of the site, is a promontory overlook with forms inspired by the local boardwalks and 'vista points'. Lounge seating, café tables, and terraced seat walls create a center for campus life and socialization.

Also on the roof deck, along the 'boardwalk', are a series of study-pods and a sculpture garden that act as an extension of the art gallery and studios beneath it. These gathering areas are set in among a mounded native coastal scrub planting echoing the protective dunes at the beach that look as if to flow over the building's edge and into the adjacent nature preserve. On the other side of the glass façade of the open-air atrium, a large patch of artificial turf brings the landscape into the building as an abstraction of the classic 'campus lawn.'

On the northern edge of the site, where it was too shady to provide typical planting, a sculptural rock garden and quiet study space are representations of the rock jetties protecting the nearby ocean beaches beyond. Throughout the site, native and drought tolerant plants help to link the site to the surrounding nature preserve.

These social features, combined with the vistas to the nature preserve and the Pacific Ocean beyond, establish a link to the regional context. One can't help but feel a deep connection to the specific locale while studying on the roof-garden and watching the sun set over the Pacific.

SIGNIFICANCE

Newport Beach Center was created in response to challenges community colleges in southern California often face; sprawling suburban developments where undeveloped land comes at a premium price, the districts are often forced into renovating existing buildings and conforming their program into the existing retail or industrial spaces available. These circumstances can produce facilities lacking a collegiate feel and entirely devoid of a 'campus' atmosphere. Coastline Community College was looking to create a true campus feeling, but on a diminished scale.

The entire Newport Beach Center is packaged into a single building pushed to the back of the 3.9 acre site—6.5 acres fewer than the existing educational facility this site would replace. In an integrated design approach, the design team decided to go vertical with the campus and change the functions of site & architecture. They shifted the second and third floors of the building off the main volume below, allowing the primary social space and 'campus quad' to occupy a roof-garden designed by the landscape architect. This garden, with art gallery, boardwalk, social spaces and multi-function use has striking views of the ocean and works in concert with an adjacent open air atrium that connects to the indoors. This horizontal shift also allowed the team to elevate public and social space in a 'vertical campus', while taking advantage of breath-taking panoramas and maximizing on-site parking—a concern for the client. What makes this project compelling is that it solves a variety of very complex problem with simple forms and materials, in the end producing an elegant prototype.

SPECIAL FACTORS

The design team took extra care in designing a site that would benefit the community and environment. The site is located within a gentrifying neighborhood and will serve as an agent of change for the community. With access to public transportation and parking designated for carpools and alternative fuel vehicles, the campus encourages students & staff to use more environmentally friendly means of travel.

Some of the strategies employed by the Landscape Architect & Civil Engineer include storm water being entirely contained on-site; beneath the parking lot are two water detention structures that collect 100% of storm water run-off until it can percolate into the native soil. The existing site has a sand lens that effectively cleans the run off while recharge the ground water table. Bio-swales, surface flow, and roof drains collect and guide site water into these Cudo Cubes® structures. The plant palette is composed of regionally native and climatically adapted plants and, combined with weather-controlled efficient irrigation techniques, reduce the need for site water by 50%. The building works with the gifts of the site, using techniques like natural ventilation, daylighting, photo-voltaic solar panels, and high performance building systems to reduce energy usage from the grid. The site and building also utilize a high amount of recycled materials—75% of the construction materials were recycled. Newport Beach Center is targeting a LEED gold rating.