

Craig Ranch Regional Park, North Las Vegas, Nevada

Purpose of Project The 170 acre site was a declining privately-owned public golf course to be sold for residential development. The City of North Las Vegas saw the great community value in this large, central parcel of open space and mature stand of shade producing pines and came up with the funds to purchase the property for redevelopment as a community park. The intent was to save the significant stand of trees and create a park that would satisfy the growing recreational needs of the community. The golf course is being transformed with playfields, children's play environment, an aquatic play area, picnic facilities, a skate park, a dog park, and multi-use trails that link future planned regional bike trails.

Role of Landscape Architect The landscape architects were the prime consultants for the project Master Plan, Phase I and the Phase II Skate Park design. The landscape architect facilitated multiple master planning workshops to gain input from the community, stakeholders and City staff. Following an arborist assessment of the condition of the trees, the layout of proposed improvements was carefully orchestrated to preserve the healthy trees. However, to avoid reliance on the pine monoculture, the landscape architects introduced a palette of new trees to provide biodiversity and a directed plan for tree succession. An irrigation system that had supported the vast expanse of golf turf was redesigned to support significantly reduced turf areas while maintaining the signature fairway trees. With new facilities weaved through the existing landscape and sandy soils, efficient and adequate irrigation coverage was a challenge.

Significance The transformation of this declining yet popular "locals" public golf course was an extremely important project to succeed. The golfers who enjoyed a cheap round were not happy, nor quiet, about losing their recreation "deal". The challenge was to re-create a community resource that would serve a significantly broader spectrum of recreation needs that were sorely unaddressed in the North Las Vegas community. The over 50,000 s.f. skate park has become a regional attraction and presents a broad range of skating and biking challenges for different skill levels of both kids and adults. The subsequent success of Craig Ranch Regional Park has generated great enthusiasm from the citizens and has encouraged funding to proceed with the continued phased development of this re-purposed park.

Special Factors

The design intent was to build upon the resources that this site presented and celebrate the unique character of the desert wherever possible. In selecting materials, the landscape architects used sand, rock, plants and animals of the locale for pavement, groundcover, signage and sculptures. Shade is extremely valued in this desert community, as well as evening and night park use. Facilities were placed to take advantage of existing shade or new shade was created with pergolas, canopies and sails where possible. Lighting was considered for security and safety, particularly in the popular skate park where nighttime use with adequate illumination is key. Due to the park's size and variety of facilities, wayfinding signs were an important part of the design. Care was taken to produce custom signage that was clear, attractive and fit into the character and color of the park.

Through the public engagement process, the design of the Skate Park facility grew considerably from its original scope when the bicycling BMXers made their interests known at design charrettes. The City wisely decided that a larger park could better accommodate both the skaters and the BMXers with similar elements. The round terraced skate plaza was designed to double as a space for not only skateboarding but for staging possible performance events. The master plan has remained the roadmap for the multiple phases necessary to fund and complete the park. The quality of the Skate Park's Phase I and II have set the standard for future phases.