

River Oaks Park
San Jose, CA

Project Identity and Location

This five-acre public park provides important community space to socialize, exercise and enjoy nature for San Jose's long-time residents and newcomers taking advantage of Silicon Valley's exploding jobs market. The park is located on a former Sony manufacturing site.

Purpose of Project

River Oaks Park was created with a private-public partnership between the City of San Jose and the developers of Crescent Village, a new mixed-use apartment village in walking distance of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's River Oaks transit station. The public park is now the flagship park for the City of San Jose and serves as a link between residents of the community, both established and new. The park balances active areas of tennis and basketball courts, a playground, and a generous lawn for pick-up games with a quieter half where a decomposed granite path winds between the majestic Redwoods and over a series of bridged bioswales.

Role of Landscape Architect

The landscape architect worked to incorporate the community's wishes to provide a design that is grounded in its local context and beloved by its users. Low impact design strategies treat stormwater as an amenity rather than a nuisance. Universal design principles create a playground to bring together children of all physical abilities. And the landscape architect advocated to preserve the site's majestic trees, including 75 Redwoods, 4 Cottonwoods, and a Heritage Valley Oak.

Significance

The preservation of dozens of mature trees minimizes the scale of the adjacent development large scale development and grounds the park in its existing local landscape. New recreational opportunities for office workers, residential neighbors, and commercial visitors make the park well-used throughout the day. The park cleans and treats stormwater runoff on-site with bridged bioswales that highlight the beauty and benefit of low impact design.

Special Factors

A public-private partnership created a landmark park for a growing city. Preserving existing mature trees on-site meant careful planning and monitoring of the trees while they were moved and maintained during construction. The site's former use as a Sony manufacturing plant and parking lot brought challenges such as heavily compacted and arsenic-contaminated soil.