Project Description

Project Identity and Location
Google Backlot, Venice, CA

Purpose of Project—We were fortunate to be asked to create gardens for a major player in the digital/technology/media corporate world across the street from their existing offices in Venice, California. They had just signed a long term lease for the three buildings and related parking on this site…the better part of a city block. Early planning studies focused on carving open space from the parking lots…ultimately accomplished by through a management tandem spaces managed by a valet. The ten month schedule for the project was greatly accelerated and included creation of a secure outdoor work and event spaces, analyzing and solving for security concerns, and making the space both fun and resilient. It gets used very hard day and night by over three hundred employees.

Role of Landscape Architect—We were brought to the table at the onset of the design process. Weekly team meetings and daily communication facilitated the quick pace and resulted in high levels of coordinated design. The highly programmed spaces provide a rich variety of zones for events, lounging, dining, and all-hands group meetings. The entry lobby is a study in indoor/outdoor living with flooring that flows from inside to out. Large variances in floor elevation of the buildings framing the court created complex accessibility issues. The solution involves a major manipulation of the site with the raised terraces, and amphitheater, and a striking slope wood walkway. Given the space is well used in both daylight and evening hours, lighting was integrated into steps and walls as well as event lighting onto the synthetic event lawn. Specimen Oaks, bio-retention gardens, curtains of bamboo, and resilient plantings add a natural balance to this architectural court. The spaces serve a multitude of uses: café, concert venue, breakout space, conference room, barbeque, meditation, games…and much more. They work are playful and work hard...just like the employees who use them.

Significance- Mundane warehouse buildings and the spaces in-between are a large part of the landscape of Southern California. This project demonstrates how spaces that were forgotten in terms of design can be elevated to be wonderful places to live and work and take advantage of our spectacular weather. In this case, buildings that might have been razed were embraced and the landscape in between has become the heart of the complex.

Special Factors— The design parameters were fascinating on this assignment. The delivery schedule was just plain fast. Security concerns and protocol for this company are high and were exacerbated by the large homeless population and encampment at the edges of the site. Employees work long hours so the spaces needed to perform day and night and with an intensity we’ve not previously encountered.