

## **Project Description**

### **Project Identity and Location**

Kaiser Permanente Antelope Valley Medical Office Building, Lancaster, California

### **Purpose of Project**

When our client decided to replace an aging hospital in this High Desert community, they brought lofty goals of developing a net-zero facility aiming for LEED Platinum certification. We drew on Kaiser's desire to serve the community and found that the generous thirteen-acre site coupled with the lack of dedicated open space in the community created a unique opportunity to craft therapeutic gardens that delivered at four scales: Patient, Family /Friends, Medical Campus, and Community. And with lofty goals we set out to create gardens that add a layer of health and wellness for visitors and patients alike.

### **Role of Landscape Architect**

While the client focused on achieving net-zero energy use, we wanted the landscape to be net-zero water use as well...a significant challenge in this region where the average rainfall is just over 7", winds are extreme, and the highest daily temperature fluctuations in the nation are experienced. This is a harsh environment with significant challenges. So what did we do? We said "let's create a park-like landscape!" The biggest challenge to our net-zero water use goal was our parallel goal to make a landscape that was comfortable, welcoming, and restorative in this environment of extremes. We worked with the topography of the site to create berms and plantings to provide protection from winds while also creating restorative green views from patient rooms. Precious rain water was carefully directed and harnessed to irrigate shrubs and trees en route to detention basins. Working with a largely native plant palette, non-native trees, shrubs, and grasses were only used in areas with the most public interface: the courtyard, amphitheater, play space, and therapy garden. Given the scope and ambitions of the project we were able to successfully negotiate with the City to bring reclaimed water to the site ten years earlier than had been planned...greatly assisting in meeting the water use goal for the gardens.

### **Significance**

The gardens have been designed with a number of unique therapeutic features. An outdoor physical/occupational therapy garden, visual access to green windrows from patient rooms, an inner courtyard with reflecting pool, a free play area for kids, an amphitheater for health education events, and a THRIVE walk with  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile loops through poppy-covered fields are but a few of the spaces we were able to program and design. The staff was also provided an outdoor conference room and lounge. We successfully advocated to keep the grounds unfenced, with careful consideration toward lighting and visibility allowing an inviting therapeutic landscape where anyone can reap the benefits of exercise, access to nature, and public awareness of healthy living.

### **Special Factors**

We worked to make our design goals and decisions transparent from early design stages in order to create buy-in and protection from value engineering. The strategy paid off and other than reducing quantity of stone paving and reducing initial plant sizing, the design remained intact through to installation.