

2016 SoCal ASLA Quality of Life Design Awards
Design-Parks and Recreation
Pavilion Park, Irvine, California

Project Identity and Location

Located on the northern edge of the Great Park Neighborhoods and adjacent to the Orange County Great Park, Pavilion Park was the first park built at the 3,700-acre former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in Irvine, California. Pavilion Park was designed to be a vibrant place that fosters community engagement and environmental sustainability, with a high performance landscape that is sensitive to the region.

Purpose of Project

The developer had a vision for the entire Orange County Great Park and adjoining neighborhoods; to create a community that fosters recreation, community engagement, and exploration by strengthening the connection of people to their environment. Pavilion Park was designed to honor the site's history and character by introducing unique elements throughout the park that pay homage to Irvine's agriculture and the former Air Station. Heritage evergreen and deciduous trees were salvaged from the Air Station and transplanted at the Park, providing scale, shade, and maturity. A large terrace welcomes visitors to the park, and was built using materials also salvaged from the Air station, including metal fencing repurposed as an overhead trellis. The terrace features numerous gathering spaces for groups of all sizes and contributes to the relaxed atmosphere of the park.

Role of Landscape Architect

The park was successfully delivered through a thoughtful and sophisticated Design-Build process, where the landscape architect managed all aspects of design, pre-development, development, and maintenance operations at Pavilion Park. The developer of the Orange County Great Park had a vision for the community - to create a more meaningful connection to nature and to each other. A partnership formed between the developer and the landscape architect to bring this vision to life. Planners and architects came together in a collaborative process driven by vision, experience, and a mutual passion for extraordinary results to turn this dream into reality.

Significance

Standing in the heart of the park, a great landscape unfolds that is framed by two significant landmarks, Santiago Peak and Mount Baldy. Views of the mountains were the impetus for the park's design, which includes visual links, physical links, and agricultural links. Visual links focus on landmarks that remind us of where we are, and are left as unobstructed view sheds to the mountains. Physical links become nodes and hubs that connect users to individual elements of the park. Agricultural links are expressed in the form of community gardens and an interactive greenhouse, reminding us of Irvine's agricultural history.

As the concept for the community park developed, the landscaping and planting palette began to unfold in response to adjacent habitats. The planting design incorporates Southern California natives and plants that are minimally dependent on water, fertilizer, or maintenance. Additionally, a layer of heritage trees add character, maturity, and scope to the community park. Overall, the landscape embraces a holistic approach through natural resource conservation which was addressed through astute planting and irrigation design, paving and drainage solution, as well as methods of reducing long term operation and maintenance cost.

Special Factors

As the first park to be built within a new master planned community, Pavilion Park sets the precedent for the inspired landscape design that is expected for all remaining parks and greenways within the Great Park Neighborhoods. The park's design has an effect on the physical and emotional connection that residents and visitors of the community have with their environment, where an inherently interactive landscape offers unlimited options for play, exploration, relaxation, and recreation.

Pavilion Park offers countless opportunities for community engagement and interaction. The terrace was designed to host gatherings of 200+; the bike pavilion offers residents a place to make repairs, pump tires, and set off safely on a cruise through the Great Park; the greenhouse is available for use to all residents and future residents of the Great Park Neighborhoods, offering an experience for families and friends to grow together. In 2015, Pavilion Park held Irvine's first Pumpkin Glow, where the community came together and broke the Guinness World Record for the longest line of carved pumpkins. Pavilion Park set the standard for park programming and design not only for the Great Park Neighborhoods, but for all future projects planned in the region.