

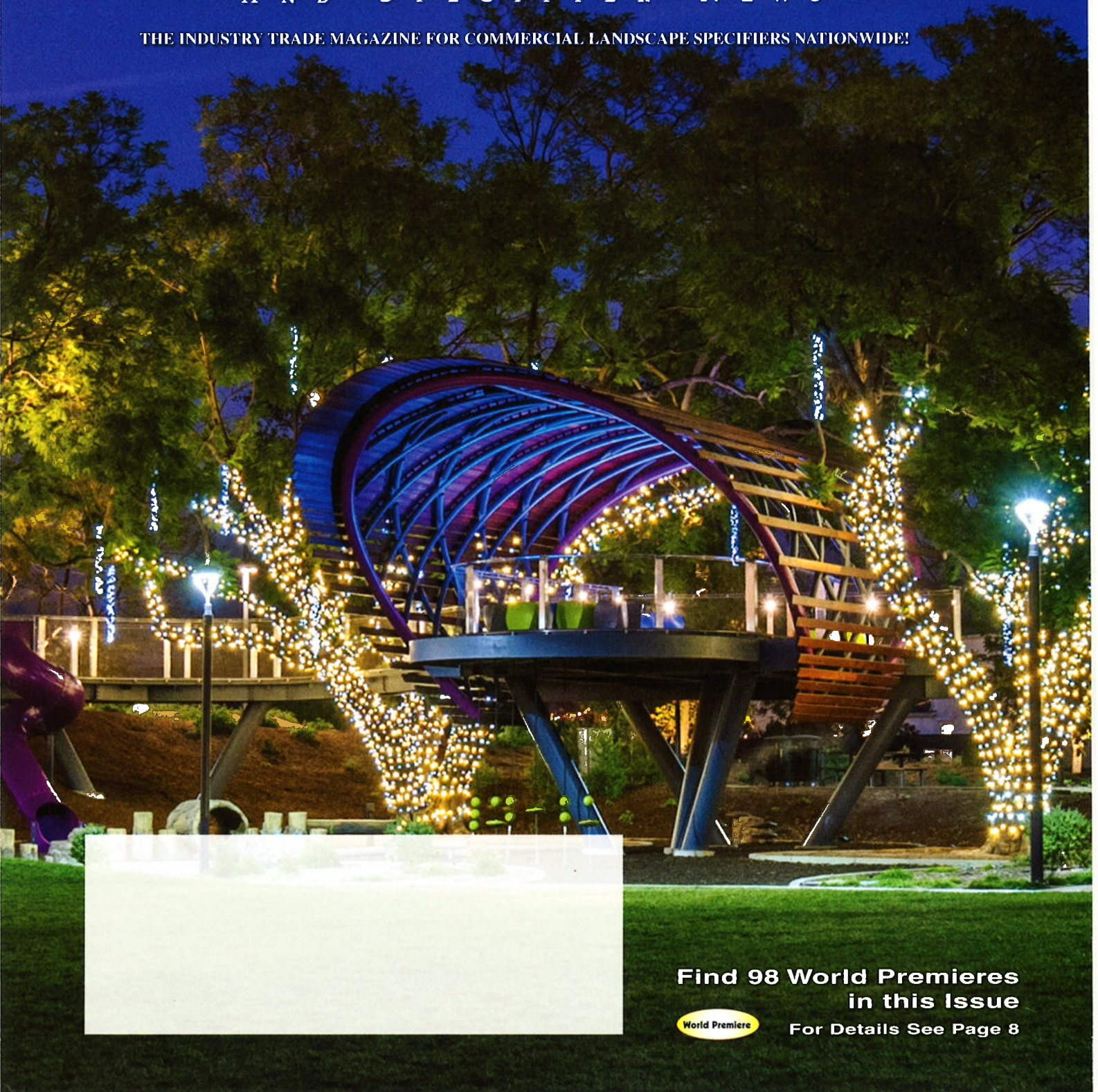
March 2016
Volume 32 Number 03

www.landscapeonline.com

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

A N D S P E C I F I E R N E W S

THE INDUSTRY TRADE MAGAZINE FOR COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE SPECIFIERS NATIONWIDE!



**Find 98 World Premieres
in this Issue**

World Premiere

For Details See Page 8

Beacon Park is nestled at the center of five new neighborhoods in Irvine, Calif. The park's focal point, its "beacon," is a 500 square foot tree house tucked into three large Jacaranda trees that comes to life at night, thanks to internal color changing LEDs and other LED fixtures. Cube furniture creates seating and mobile play structures for parents and children alike. The spiral slide takes kids down to play on logs and rope climbers (Landscape Structures). Deergrass, grassland sedge, and yarrow are planted in and around the play area, with some Texas sage at the edge of the area.

PHOTOS: BRAD NELSON, StudioK1

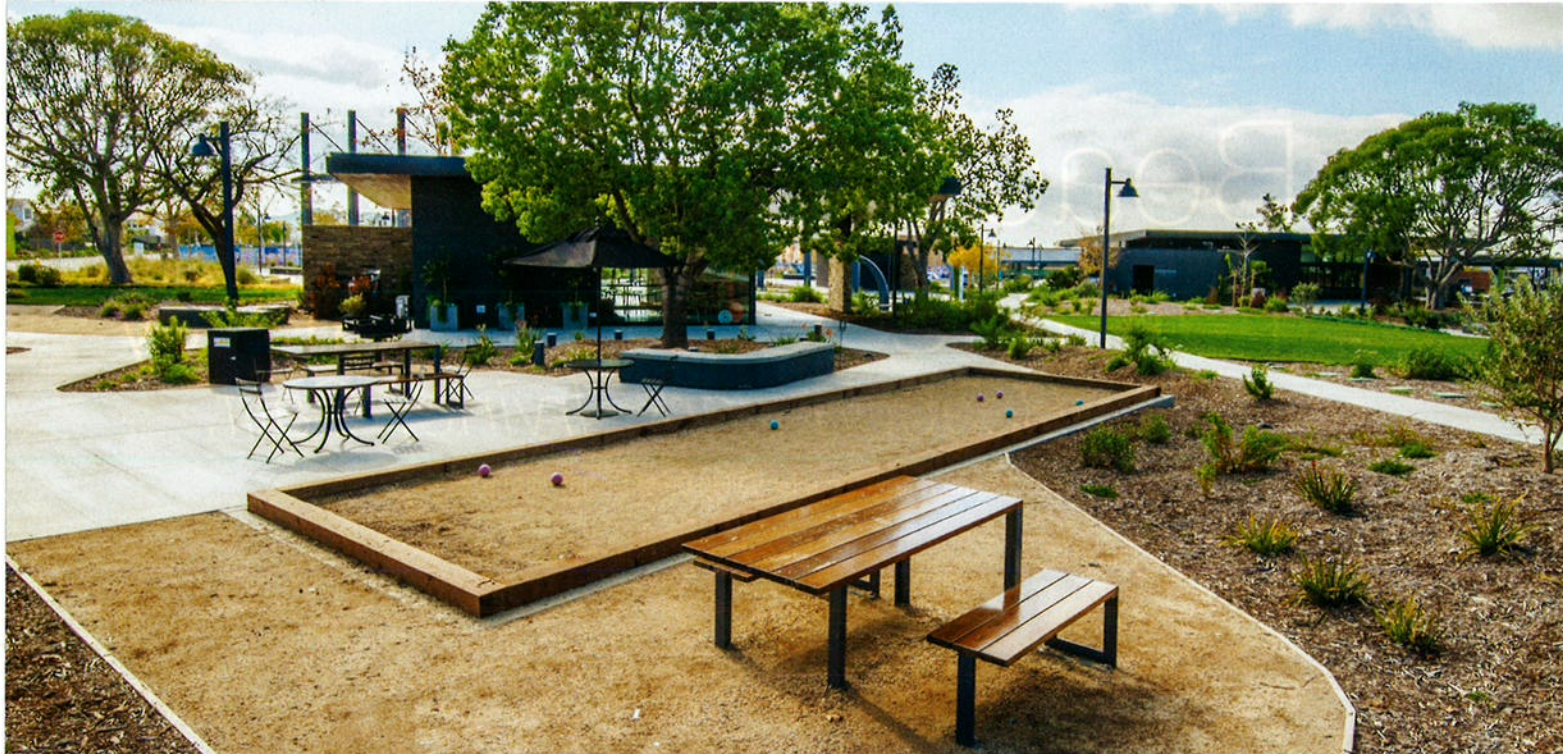


A Beacon for the Community

Beacon Park, Irvine, Calif.

Landscape Architecture by Valley Crest Design Group





Top

The bike pavilion and welcome center buildings are the primary destinations of travelers first arriving at the park. Beside these buildings are large ficus and kurrajong heritage trees that shade large areas of patio tables and chairs. Charcoal grills (Dumor) are provided for users' enjoyment, and ash receptacles simplify cleanup. Custom picnic tables made of wood atop powder coated steel frames make an ideal place to host a barbecue. The colorful softscape is filled with California buckwheat, western redbud, black sage, kangaroo paw and purple hopseed. The contractors built the bocce ball court; life-sized chess is just a short walk from this location.

Bottom, Left

The sport court is partially covered with custom shade structures made of perforated metal panels hung off of steel columns. These provide

visual interest to the space as the playful shadows move and change throughout the day. At night the space remains useable with LED floodlights for the court, while the canopies are illuminated with LED uplights. Low and sparse dwarf coyote brush populates most of the landscape here, with sycamore and kurrajong trees making up the vertical planting.

Bottom, Right

The entrance to the park off of Beacon Street leads to the deciduous zone near the pool surrounded by large Aleppo pines. The ground planting is random, emulating nature with Lindheimer's muhly showing predominantly, with lowboy acacia, coffeeberry, Point Sal spreader and common yarrow dotted throughout. Park standard LED poles (Sternberg Lighting) are tucked into the landscape to provide lighting to all of the hardscaped areas.

At the edge of the Orange County Great Park in Irvine, Calif., a unique family of neighborhoods is taking shape. Centrally located between neighborhoods, local landmark destinations, and other community parks, Beacon Park serves as a gathering point for all of the Fivepoint Great Park neighborhoods. With many adjoining walking trails and community-wide bike paths, Beacon Park is expected to receive visitors from all directions.

Born from the idea of "navigation" and inspired by man's methods of navigating throughout time, the triangular Beacon Park expresses forms of air, land and sea navigation within its details, and is designed as a place where kids can explore, discover, and learn about the key features that define "navigation."



Above

The pool entrance embodies all that the park has to offer: sharp modern architecture finished with natural products nestled into native planting environments, creating serenity within modern amenities. The pool entry gate (inset) is clad in wood, while stacked stone pool buildings, stucco walls, and glass paneling make up the "fence." Aleppo pines and Chinese elms frame the entry. Muhly and Berkeley sedge create soft edges to the walkways that lead to the gateway. Simple, elegant signs provide wayfinding, and LED fixtures give adequate lighting. Large lounge chairs and oversized sofas provide plenty of places to relax beside the pool or spa; sunshades and concrete side tables complete the experience. Lush succulents fill out the planter boxes, keeping things low so the entire park can be viewed through the glass panels.

Left

The welcome center area features an outdoor kitchen with polished concrete and wood countertops, ample seating, and an intricate custom metal shade structure with integral LED lighting (B-K Lighting). Visitors can create culinary masterpieces in the pizza oven or the Tandoor oven, while enjoying the expansive views of the park. In the distance, the grand tree house is nestled in three large jacarandas. A full complement of ficus, Aleppo and Afghan pines, and sycamore trees frame the rest of the park. White sage, dwarf coyote bush and colorful kangaroo paw meet with muhly and yarrow where two planting zones come together.

Different landscape features, trails, and built elements help enhance the experience and encourage various activities. Landforms within the park define edges and provide privacy from surrounding activity while creating interesting circulation patterns. The park uses gravel, decomposed granite, and native vegetation to maintain a natural looking environment.

By Air

The main entrance of the park, at the intersection of Beacon Street and Benchmark, shows the influence of air navigation. Structural vocabulary is inspired by aircraft flight patterns during takeoff, with winged shapes and upturned roof angles. This area features community-oriented spaces for large-scale events including movie nights, farmers' markets, and sports. The welcome center, in the middle of the area, is set "in the land," as if it is emerging from the ground. The center's sliding glass walls open to a large patio lounge and community kitchen space complete with kitchen amenities, firepits, and views of the park. Beside the welcome center, a large multi-purpose court covered with flight-inspired shade structures

provides a flexible space for basketball, hopscotch, or community gatherings. A bike barn, bocce ball court and life-sized chessboard are set near the court. The edges of the walks, planters and other horizontal surfaces mimic flight descent patterns with rounded edges and smooth transitions.

By Sea

Directly across from a new K-8 school on the west end of the site, sea navigation extends educational opportunities to students at the park's learning center. Inspired by the wind patterns of the Portolan Grid that charts destinations over seas, geometric forms in this area are sharp and angular with architecture that is "on the land," with an emphasis on strong connections. This sector of the park is comprised of an intimately scaled garden environment featuring a pool, spa, and several lounges. Adjoining the pool is the learning center, an outdoor classroom and lounge with large slate art and learning walls, a variety of seating, and a glass fireplace. A family oriented barbecue garden is also in this area, featuring seating and walking opportunities that separate the park from the adjacent housing tracts.

Beacon Park (Continued from page 88)

Right

Reinforcing the navigation themes of the park (air, sea and land), the playground equipment encourages kids to journey, climb, descend, and imagine. A cushioned ground of mulch under the play equipment gently catches those who push the limits too far. Custom wood benches are matched with colorful metal retaining walls that also function as planting edges. Berkeley sedge and blue finger succulents make up much of the groundcover, while various pine and sycamore trees are scattered through the playground.



Above

The playground for very young children includes safety surfacing with round, meandering edges. The equipment was selected to create an enjoyable environment for the children and parents alike. Soft planting areas are filled with mulch, intermittent sedge and muhly that can tolerate high and erratic traffic. Sycamore and strawberry trees fill the undulating planting areas around the playground to provide color and shade.

By Land

The third region of the park features organic and curvilinear landscape forms that allude back to land navigation and the purity of our environment. In this sector, the architecture is “above the land,” with play equipment enticing children to climb, and a tree house floating amongst three large heritage trees. Play equipment is organized into separate areas that provide opportunities for different ages to enjoy and be stimulated by adventure.

The tree house, a large platform structure woven into the branches of the trees, separates the playgrounds. It includes a large shaded observation deck that overlooks the park and movable furniture to creatively transform the space. Integrated handrail lighting and floor-mounted color changing LEDs bring the tree house fully to life after sunset. A curvilinear suspended walkway connects to the nearby trail system, while a

spiral slide provides a fun way to drop down into a play area complete with climbing ropes to the underside of the structure.

The landscape environment of Beacon Park is designed to be naturalistic with three unique plant communities. The street corridors that define two edges of the park are comprised of the grasslands, while the community edge is the deciduous zone that allows for ample shade and privacy. Where these two zones meet, ecotones, or landscape transition areas, are introduced to encourage connections across habitats and to support species richness and diversity. The most noteworthy planting selection is the collection of heritage trees reclaimed from the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station that once occupied the area. These mature trees add an abundance of character, their unique identities fully displayed to park-goers through thoughtful and strategic arrangements.



Top

Growing out of the ground like the jacarandas in which it is woven, the supports of the walkway into the tree house were made to imitate the "V" of the tree trunks. LED steplights are neatly integrated into the stainless steel handrails (Jakob Rope Systems), illuminating the curvilinear skywalk that leads to the canopies of these magnificent trees. LEDs hidden in the tree branches light their entirety. The sheer size and sparkle of the tree house make it the beacon of this park and the destination of all of its visitors.

Bottom

The Beacon Park tree house is a magical place for anyone who gets to experience it. A tube steel skeleton shrouded with wood, it provides shade and a safe haven for people to hang out. Visitors can rearrange the movable furniture to create their own seating arrangements and to watch the sun setting as the trees come to life with light.

Team List

Developer: FivePoints Development

Landscape Architect: Valley Crest Design Group

Architect: Ware Malcomb

Lighting Consultant: StudioK1

Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing, Low Voltage Engineering and Audio Visual: tk1sc

Civil Engineering: Hunsaker & Associates

Structural Engineering: KPFF

General Contractor: Park Builders, LLC; Snyder Langston

Landscape Contractor: Valley Crest Landscape

Electrical Contractor: ESI Contracting

Pools: Aquatic Technologies

Dry Utilities: Morrow Management

Geotechnical: Engeo Incorporated

Signage Design: RSM Design

Signage Contractor: Outdoor Dimensions

Successes

The park had several design and construction challenges that shaped the final product into a multi-functional space suitable for all ages. As both the symbol of the neighborhood and a centralized gathering point, Beacon Park promotes access to immediate and surrounding communities. This volume of traffic meant that the park required strong connections for pedestrians, bicycles and cars. The park facilitates all travelers, but strongly promotes bicycle travel, with a dedicated bike pavilion where cyclists can park, pump up tires, or make minor repairs.

Possibly the biggest obstacle for the design and construction teams was the tree house. The concept was a large lounge space - a beacon visible to the whole park - that all ages could explore and enjoy, nestled amongst three of the site's heritage trees. Rather than create a platform that only a few children could fit in, the team worked to make a house that could contain many groups of children and adults. It became immediately apparent that it would be environmentally impossible to support a structure like this from just the trees

themselves, so the tree house morphed into an elevated platform with trunk-like connections to an underground structural footing. The integration between the tree branches is still very present as the curvilinear skywalk brings you up between two trees, passes you directly through the trunk system of the central tree, and into the tree house between trees and branches. The design and construction teams spent hours coordinating the exact dimensions and techniques that would be used to place the walkway between the trunks of a tree without damaging any of the components.

The lighting design brings new life to the park after dark. The accent lighting on the heritage trees provides focus to the nodes of the triangle; sparkling LED strings create an aura of magic. Local code mandates specific levels of illumination on park walkways to create a safe and secure environment. Amenity spaces provide lantern-like respites while the color-changing tree house serves as the "Beacon" of the park. The true success of the park is evident from the laughter of the children who enjoy its nighttime wonder, and the faces of the parents who appreciate its sophisticated design and amenities.