



Vista View

Recreation area rises from a former landfill

In the last few years, we have faced new environmental concerns in a world made aware of the need for “green living,” “green building” and other environmentally conscious initiatives. The city of Chandler, Ariz., is participating in this issue by taking on its second environmentally oriented project in reclaiming and reshaping the landscape of a former landfill to create a new vision for a premier park with recreational gems.

Developing municipal parks from former refuse sites has been successful in other parts of the country, so the city embraced the concept when its only landfill closed in November 2005. Since then, the city’s Solid Waste Services, Environmental Management and Parks divisions have worked together along

with contractors, Environmental Planning Group (EPG) Landscape Architects and Valley Rain Construction, to design and develop the Paseo Vista Recreation Area, a special-use park. The park will provide views of the entire city and Southeast Valley, and create several unique recreational activities—all while embracing an environmental functionality and safety awareness for the former landfill.

Creating The Vision

Located on a 64-acre site that contains more than 2 million tons of compacted trash that will continue to decompose, Paseo Vista is a \$12.8-million park development project, funded through the sale of General Obligation Bonds that was

approved by voters in May 2004. The park will be a new landmark and popular gathering place for residents to enjoy amenities like archery lanes, a disc-golf course, a bark park, a playground, picnic ramadas and a network of trails.

After nearly a year of construction, the wait will soon be over for surrounding neighborhood residents—who also had input throughout the design process—to ascend to the top of Paseo Vista Recreation Area.

“Paseo Vista’s amenities and activities are meant to yield a lower volume of traffic, and consist of limited night-time lighting, given the proximity of several neighborhoods and the Chandler Municipal Airport down the street,” says Don Tolle, Park Planning Superintendent.



“Since it is in a flight path and surrounded by residential communities, there are no traditional sports fields, as it is designed in a dawn-to-dusk park fashion.”

Carving A New Path For An Old Site

The former landfill was opened in the early 1980s on a site considered to be in the extreme southern portion of the city. By the time it closed in 2005, several residential communities hugged its eastern and southern borders. Federal regulations set in the 1990s mandated that measures be put in place to sample groundwater and monitor for contamination, while ensuring that gases don't escape into the surrounding neighborhoods.

When redeveloping a landfill, there are environmental factors that must be

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Environmental And Artistic Elements

Since the park is rising from a landfill, city officials also wanted to incorporate components that would not only educate the public on the value of recycling but demonstrate unique ways that recycled materials could be reused. Salvaged tires were used to form retaining walls, the safety backstop to the archery range and a colorful retaining wall in the children's play area. Large quantities of reclaimed sidewalk and other concrete were used to form additional retaining walls and curbing, while the drive surfaces make use of milled asphalt from other city street-improvement projects. There also will be an interpretive area with art made from a cross-section of materials normally found in a landfill.

Gabion basket walls were used throughout the site as a major piece in preserving the land formation, protecting against erosion, and expediting the run-off of excess water into three major retention basins at the corners of the park. They also project an aesthetically appealing look by using stone that

enhances the visual character of the Gabion walls as landscape features. Rainwater will run through a collection of channels, slowing the velocity and alleviating erosion before emptying into the basins, while an elaborate automated irrigation system will tend to the vegetation.

"The operating theme for the site is no penetration or infiltration into the protective cap, while allowing for ventilation through the landfill gas-collection system to the flare station," Wilson says.

New Urban Park Experience

Upon completion, Paseo Vista Recreation Area will provide a panoramic view of the entire city and adjoining Paseo Trail that serves as a bicycle-friendly, jogger's paradise. It makes efficient recreational use of a massive land space for the surrounding community that would otherwise have remained dormant within a growing, affluent section of the city, and it has the potential to be a test case for other Arizona cities and developers considering similar landfill redevelopment projects.

Categorized as a special-use park due

to its size, location and the population it serves in the surrounding three-mile radius, the overall theme that has driven the design and development of the Paseo Vista Recreation Area is that the landfill is returning the waste material back to nature, while the recreation area will return the land back to the community.

"Chandler residents will come to have a different perspective and experience when they visit Paseo Vista; it isn't a traditional greenbelt park setting," Wilson says. "It will have tremendous views of the city along with some exciting new recreational offerings and environmentally-conscious features that will become a part of this new park experience." **PRB**

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