2011 ASLA Design Awards

Amaranth
Merit Award
Land Stewardship Designation
Design Workshop – Aspen

Planning & Urban Design
Project Name: Amaranth  
Project Site: Goodyear, Arizona  
Category: 2: Planning

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Amaranth community is located approximately 45 miles southwest of downtown Phoenix along State Route 238. At approximately 10,000 acres, Amaranth features mountain views, significant washes and large tracts of natural desert. Substantially surrounded by public lands, the Amaranth community will become a major gateway to the Sonoran Desert National Monument. The project exhibits the highest standards of environmental planning and new urbanist design principles, creating a new standard of development for the Phoenix Metropolitan region.

ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

The landscape architect and planner led the master planning effort for the community, providing the overall site analysis, open space framework, land use plan, and zoning plan. In addition, the landscape architect provided site design for all parks, streetscapes, and urban plazas. The landscape architect was also a major contributor to the Pattern Book which will guide the quality of all new development.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The amaranth, an imaginary flower that never fades, became the inspiration for the community and for the sustainable design principles upon which it is based. An extensive McHargian site analysis insured that steep slopes, major drainages and floodplains, and important geologic and vegetation conditions were protected. The surrounding desert landscape flows into and through the community to insure the integration of native habitat and promotion of water conservation.

The community structure concentrates development in core areas on the site, so that the most sensitive lands adjacent to the public open spaces are preserved. The community centers provide jobs and encourage self sustainable economic development. The design provides more than 48,000 dwellings, 376 acres mixed use centers, and 1,500 acres of employment.

The community is divided into walkable neighborhoods of mixed use housing, each organized around parks, schools, and other civic amenities. A comprehensive open space system allows residents to move from neighborhood to neighborhood and to retail and civic amenities with minimal street crossings. The plan also links parks, plazas, open-space corridors, boulevards, streets, drainages, school grounds and home landscapes into a single system and provide places for people to meet, recreate, and participate in their community. Trail connections link the community to the Sonoran National Monument to the west. Grading for housing development provides the material for carefully designed sound attenuation of the
highway and railroad that divides the property and the major land fill to the north. The educational framework includes opportunities for lifelong learning, from pre-school to community college.

At approximately 690 acres, the first phase of development incorporates over 125 acres of open space and parks, 42 acres of village and 2,000 dwelling units. In addition, a major soccer park complex and park is incorporated into the first phase of development to provide a regional draw for the development. The soccer fields, angled at 15 degrees east of north-south for optimal solar orientation during play, also creates activity pockets for a variety of park uses.

Other parks are generally scaled down in size, while maintaining a total acreage consistent with NRPA standards in order to insure that small parks are within easy walking distance of every residence. Art is incorporated into all retail areas, parks and public plazas in a comprehensive scheme to infuse the art throughout the community. In the soccer park, the landscape architect draws inspiration from the sport of soccer through the design of over-scaled soccer balls and cleats, providing not only icons for the community park, but also play structures for children of all ages to enjoy.

The sanitary sewerage treatment facility is designed as a major regional park with a major sports complex and riparian habitat reserve providing for groundwater recharge and reuse of treated effluent. Landscape improvements were designed utilizing both a capital and operating budget to insure that the community association and local government can maintain these improvements in a fiscally responsible manner.

SPECIAL FACTORS

Designing within the context of the Sonoran desert, the landscape architect incorporated detailed conservation and management strategies into the community planning guidelines. Strict water reduction standards enabled the community to reduce its water usage needs from the regional standard of .7 ac. Ft./dwelling to .55 ac. Ft./dwelling. These accounted for a savings of 6,150 ac. Ft. which translated into an additional 3,380 dwellings. The community’s pursuit of environmental stewardship can also be witnessed through the design of the Mobile School which is anticipated to earn gold level LEED certification. Finally, the plan also incorporates the Anza National Historic Trail, an amenity which winds its way through the community and links the community to the Sonoran Desert National Monument.

SIGNIFICANCE

Amaranth is a model for a sustainable community with a density creation, sensitive natural environment preservation, water conserving strategy, and cultural appreciation. Utilizing significant components from natural environment to socio-cultural aspects to serve as decision-making tools, the analytical approach makes a well woven community framework structure. Amaranth provides a new standard of development for the Phoenix Metropolitan region, incorporating sustainable design and New Urbanist principles to create a special sense of place for the community.