

Heritage Bark Park

By Ben Fish, landscape architect/associate, project manager
Design Workshop, Stateline, Nev.

A park for dogs or a park for dog owners? The nine-acre Heritage Bark Park in the Las Vegas Valley is a place for neighbors and their families (both human and canine) to meet and mingle. The valley needed a year-round community destination and gathering place for its growing number of dog owners. Heritage Bark Park provides a powerful answer to that need, urging people to reconnect to the landscape and creating a whimsical and unique space for social interaction by pet owners and the overall community.

A combination of structures and vegetation at Heritage Bark Park in the Las Vegas Valley create pockets of shade. To get people outdoors in the hot desert environment of southern Nevada, you have to design comfortable facilities, and don't forget to specify shade structures (Shade 'N' Net of Arizona) throughout. Seating areas reinforce the park theme through the use of custom dog bone benches (UPC Parks /Universal Precast Concrete).



Above: A vehicular roundabout orients visitors to the park. A short path leads to the central plaza where gates to the three dog runs are located. Connections to regional trail systems branch out from here, with the naturalized forms of the design elements blending into the desert landscape. At the center of the roundabout are youthful *Parkinsonia* 'Desert museum' Palo Verde trees. "They are deciduous, but because of the green trunks and stately shape they are one of my personal favorites for the southwest," explains Landscape Architect/Associate Ben Fish, project manager, Design Workshop.

Left: The beauty of the Mojave desert is celebrated with native plants grown from seed collected in the Las Vegas Valley. Honey mesquite, catclaw and desert sweet acacia were installed as low-water trees. Shrubs like globe mallow, brittle brush and creosote bush help to tie in the rock and boulder ground plans. Mojave yucca, deer grass and bear grass added a variety of desert textures.

Design Background

Local public input revealed that dog owners in the city of Henderson, Nev. (pop. 252,064), a southern suburb of Las Vegas at about 1,330 feet of elevation, longed for a place to relax and connect with their community and fellow dog owners. Their desire made sense. According to the National Pet Owners Survey, nearly 40 percent of U.S. households

have at least one dog. And those numbers are rising. While working on the larger 160-acre Heritage Park Campus, the design team, led by Design Workshop, refocused their efforts to meet immediate community needs by designing and building a dog park within 12 months.

Input from dog owners, training facilities, animal control, animal trainers, veterinarians, the general public and city park



Above: The raised circular concrete planter at the entrance to the plaza offers more Palo Verde trees and yellow flowering *Lantana x hybridum* "New Gold" shrubs.

Right: The local kids named the sculptural puppy (Cemrock Landscapes, Inc.) "Barkules," who greets visitors at the central plaza, centered between the three dog areas. The ornamental fencing (*Ameristar*) at the central plaza allows dog owners to view what types of dogs are using any of the dog runs and choose the area that best suits their pooch. Here, the dogs can adjust to the presence of other animals from the safer, less intimidating plaza side before entering the dog runs. Large paw prints of recycled rubber play surfacing cushion the ground.

Right, bottom: The park entry shows the low-energy consuming LEDs (Kim Lighting) with full-cut off fixtures to reduce light dispersion. The purple-flowering trees are *Chilopsis linearis*, desert willow. The attractive colored concrete sidewalks are in "Baja Red" and "Mesa Buff" (Davis Colors).

staff went into the overall design of the dog park. From that feedback, the team developed a park that included play features for man and dog, three safe and separate fenced dog runs with a variety of amenities, plus separate spaces for different pet personalities. A key design element was the ceremonial entry with permeable vehicular pavers that focuses views into the pedestrian plaza. Parking is not the focus of the park entry, so





it is located adjacent to the plaza and accessible to all users. The major organizing design element is the central plaza, a gathering space and focal point of the park with its shade structures, sculptures and paw-print paving pattern. All park uses connect to the plaza, the dog runs, the parking area and the greater trail connections.

Guiding Principles, Design Goals

- Create comfortable spaces for social interaction.
- Design for human and dog comfort, meaning, provide shade, water, seating and landscape elements of seasonal interest.
- Create safety for people and dogs of all sizes and personalities.
- Adhere to the Heritage Park's principles of sustainability, which include: embrace the desert environment, use water-harvesting techniques, employ onsite stormwater management,

including permeable paving, uphold the urban forestry plan, and reduce the heat effect with a 50 percent shade coverage over all hard-surface paving.

- Maximize depth and interest in the landscape with a rich palette of native rock, and minimize lawn and water-thirsty plants.
- Promote connectivity to neighborhoods with enhanced access to the park and trails that link to Lake Mead Parkway and the River Mountain Loop Trail.
- Promote the use of public art in community park settings.

Implementing the Design

Intimate and public seating areas were integrated with playful art features and custom shade structures. Each of the three dog runs contains earthen berms, formal and informal seating, shade structures, hardy, low-water trees and shrubs,

Top, left: The native and low-water use noninvasive plants are drip irrigated. Recreated arroyos collect stormwater and allow it to percolate into the ground water. The parking lots have flush curbs to capture storm water from the parking area and sidewalks. Water is kept on-site to provide additional water for the landscape.

Above and bottom left: Standard benches (Outdoor Creations) are also on site to add a variety of seating options. Half of the hard-surface paving areas are shaded. The entry areas into each of the three dog runs have double gates to control dogs upon entering or leaving the dog fun zones.

central lawn area and deer grass, a favorite of all dogs. The elements were thoughtfully combined to create a park that contributes to the community's physical and social health by allowing safe outdoor interaction between diverse groups of residents and their pets.

This rich palette of materials includes four types of native rock mulch, adaptive and native plants, three types of concrete

paving, colored recycled rubber paving, and permeable vehicular pavers with flush curbs in the parking lot to percolate runoff into the ground-water table. The shade structures, dog sculpture and dog-bone-shaped benches were all custom designed. During construction the designers and contractors created shop drawings to enable full implementation of the design intent, sometimes cycling them five or six times before gaining approval.



Above: Sustainable stormwater management includes permeable vehicular pavers for the "ceremonial" entry roundabout, which focuses views into the pedestrian plaza. Parking, however, is adjacent to the plaza. The infrastructure directs runoff to the onsite natural arroyo before continuing to the Las Vegas wetlands.

Protecting the Desert Landscape

The contractor was held to strict boundaries so as not to disturb the desert landscape. Where land was disturbed, the rock was salvaged, stockpiled and then installed in the final landscape as native revegetation rock mulch. A nontoxic patina was applied to "age" the rock mulch to match it to the colors of the adjacent undisturbed lands and surrounding Mojave Desert landscape.

Water conservation was the top priority in selecting plants. Lawn was not used as decorative filler in any area, but only sited for the dogs in the center of each dog run. Along the borders of the dog run decomposed granite was installed in place of lawn, as turf here would tend to be dug up and quickly destroyed by the canines.

Shrubs and trees were planted in key areas to provide shade and interest along the plaza, parking and the dog runs. The

native Mojave plants were grown from seed collected in the Las Vegas Valley, making those plants genetically true and adapted to the climate. Honey mesquite, catclaw and desert sweet acacia were installed as low-water trees. Shrubs like globe mallow, brittle brush and creosote bush help to tie in the rock and boulder ground plane. Accent plants such as the Mojave yucca, deer grass and bear grass added a variety of textures as seen in the native desert. The outcome is a landscape that evokes the Mojave, while creating a memorable community outdoors space.

The Outcome

As the largest dog park in the Las Vegas Valley, the Bark Park has generated great excitement and pride among Henderson residents. The number of users increases daily as neighbors and park visitors recommend the park to others. Park maintenance is pleased to have a facility that looks great and can withstand the punishing

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Left: A number of dog agility course elements (Dog On It Parks) are provided in one dog play area. The equipment includes training elements for dogs of all sizes and is set in decomposed granite to minimize the impact of dogs running and digging.

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impacts of heavy dog use. Some of the most notable or unique elements and aspects of this project include:

- Infrastructure and maintenance costs were reduced by the use of sustainable stormwater management facilities that direct water to enter the onsite natural arroyo before continuing to the Las Vegas wetlands.
- Agility equipment became both training aids and another opportunity for public art, especially when paired with the planned Fire-Hydrant Garden with water-play elements.
- Barkules, the larger-than-life puppy sculpture named by the local children, greets visitors at the park's entrance. This public art is a photo opportunity and a play structure for children of all ages to recreate safely away from the canine community. Barkules lounges on dog-paw shaped playground safety surfacing.
- The dog theme is carried out throughout the park. The plaza has dog-bowl planters, dog-bone benches, and a soon-to-be constructed "dog house" restroom. These elements add useful public artwork at no extra cost when compared to the standard concrete bench and planters. The canine theme is reinforced with large paw prints in the paving patterns made of recycled rubber play surfacing. All activity areas have artistic elements and are equally accessible to the plaza and parking.

The Team

Landscape Architect
Design Workshop (Prime Consultant) – Stateline, Nev.

Project Manager: Ben Fish

Principal: Steve Noll

Staff: Micah Langdon

Staff: Chris Walsh

Civil Engineering Consultant
Paul Fritz, PE
Langon Engineering – Las Vegas, Nev.

Electrical Consultant
Jon Foster, PE
Professional Design Associates, Inc. – Henderson, Nev.

Irrigation Consultant
David Brasnick
ACI Irrigation Design – Escondido, Calif.

General Contractor
Hardy Construction – Las Vegas

Client/Owner
City of Henderson, Nev.
Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments

Right: The park connects to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, and community centers via a network of wide sidewalks and shared-use paths. Visitors are encouraged to bike or walk to the park with ample bike parking provided.

Many inhabitants of Las Vegas Valley do not have an intimate connection to the Mojave's natural environment, largely because of controlled indoor climates and vehicular dependence. The Heritage Bark Park invites residents to connect to the desert environment and increase their level of exercise, and their dogs', for healthier living. Successfully recognizing dog owners as a user group that has not traditionally been addressed in park and recreational design is an achievement to be proud of. This park allowed the landscape architects to connect to a large segment of the population for exercise, social interaction and enhance the residents' sense of community and environmental awareness.

About Design Workshop

Founded in 1969, Design Workshop is an international landscape architecture, land planning, urban design and strategic services firm with six offices in the U.S. and work spanning the globe. The firm has been recognized with over 150 prestigious awards for its work in community planning, new communities, urban centers, resorts, public parks, brownfield redevelopments, golf courses and residences. The firm's philosophy challenges the project team to equally integrate and balance artistic vision, environmental sensitivity, community values and sound economics to create unique places that stand the test of time. It refers to this approach as DW Legacy Design®.

Vendors / Suppliers

Custom Dog Bone Shaped Bench:
UPC Parks / Universal Precast Concrete

Standard Bench: Outdoor Creations

Bike racks: Landscape Forms

Bollards, removable: Dumar

Drinking Fountains:
MDF, Most Dependable Fountains

Equipment, dog agility: Dog On It Parks

Fencing, ornamental: Ameristar

LEDs: Kim Lighting

Vehicular permeable pavers: Basaltix

Dog waste receptacles: Dogpot

Trash receptacles: Outdoor Creations

Safety surfacing, playground: TotTurf

Sculpture, custom dog: Cemrock Landscapes, Inc.

Shade Structures: Shade 'N Net of Arizona



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