

## GRAND PARK DESIGN BACKGROUNDER

Los Angeles-based Rios Clementi Hale Studios designed Grand Park, a 12-acre, four block public park in downtown Los Angeles that stretches from The Music Center on the west to City Hall on the east. The firm, which specializes in architecture, landscape architecture, planning, interiors and product design, engaged in a multi-year planning process that included interactive workshops and forums with community groups, arts entities, civic and governmental bodies and neighborhood constituents. The final result is a unified, pedestrian-friendly civic space and a signature destination for downtown Los Angeles that acknowledges and represents the wishes, goals and insights of the people of the County of Los Angeles.

Grand Park's landscape design and architecture create a distinctive, interconnected and inviting civic space. The design is inspired by the diversity of the people of the region, both explicitly and implicitly, in the variety of its lawns, terraces, plazas and gardens. Grand Park is a public garden that reclaims a key urban site to celebrate the Los Angeles of yesterday, today and tomorrow. This distinctive space is designed to "feel" like Los Angeles, with its lush and diverse vegetation echoing the region's numerous backyard gardens, as well as open lawns, gardens, bright magenta furniture and shady spaces. Another nod to the diverse communities of Los Angeles are the signage totems (designed by Sussman/Prejza & Company) that welcome visitors in the 25 languages that are listed on Los Angeles County voter registration forms.

One of the greatest improvements that immediately engages the public is the new terraced entry to the park from Grand Avenue. The park now extends naturally from Grand Avenue's sidewalk to the Fountain Plaza, offering views of the restored fountain, new splash pad and the surrounding landscaping.

Grand Park is organized into four public spaces. Those spaces include:

- **Fountain Plaza** with the regal, restored Arthur J. Will Memorial Fountain and interactive water features (by Fluidity Design Consultants); new buildings, which house the park office and public restrooms; Olive Court, a plaza space that marks the historic alignment of Olive Street with olive trees and Mediterranean plantings, as well as historic speaker poles and benches
- **Performance Lawn** with broad expanses of grass and a small stage. This shady lawn area incorporates several existing Jacaranda trees and is surrounded by various gardens containing plants from North America, Australia and Southeast Asia.
- **Community Terrace**, a large central plaza surrounded by gardens from each of the world's six Floristic Kingdoms; small lawn areas for picnics and lounging; a Flag Garden with historic American flags; the Broadway Terraces that provide ADA access down to the street level and informal stepped-seating areas

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- **Event Lawn**, an open, flexible area for large public gatherings and marketplace, and a dog run.

The floristic gardens, a crucial element of the design, beautify the park with nearly 150 of the site's existing mature trees, 50 of which were removed during construction and returned to the park and re-planted. The diverse plant palette stems from the organization of the world's six Floristic Kingdoms—Boreal, Neotropical, Paleotropical, South African, Australian and Antarctic. While these regions have occurred due to specific environmental factors, Los Angeles provides a climate of easy adaptation for the various plant communities of the world to come together. This great global pageant of plants also pays tribute to Los Angeles' wonderfully diverse population. Intermingled with native plantings, these species from the various floristic regions are organized into gardens that are distributed along the length of the park. Garden markers (designed by Sussman/Prejza & Company) resemble oversized garden stakes and indicate the region, describe the climate and talk about the specific characteristics of the featured plant.

Grand Park was designed to be environmentally sensitive in several respects. A series of filtration planters and dispersement lawns filter more than five million gallons of water annually before it reaches city storm drains. Large expanses of grass feature the hybrid Bermuda species, which was selected for its durability and drought resistance. Additionally, drought-resistant plantings minimize water use and are irrigated primarily via sub-surface water-efficient drip tubing that delivers water directly to the root zones.

Wide steps—along with ADA-accessible ramps, switchback paths and the landscape architect's reworked grades—mitigate Bunker Hill's 90 feet of grade change throughout the length of the park.

**Rios Clementi Hale Studios** has earned an international reputation for its collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach, establishing an award-winning tradition across an unprecedented range of design disciplines. The firm's four principals—Mark Rios, FAIA, FASLA; Julie Smith-Clementi, IDSA; Frank Clementi, AIA, AIGA; and Bob Hale, FAIA—comprise a team involved in every aspect of design, from practice to education. Acknowledging the firm's diverse body of work, the American Institute of Architects, California Council gave Rios Clementi Hale Studios its 2007 Firm Award, the organization's highest honor. For its varied landscape work—from civic parks to private gardens—the firm was named a finalist in the 2009 Cooper-Hewitt National Design Awards. Since 1985, the architects, landscape architects, planners and urban, interior, exhibit, graphic and product designers at Rios Clementi Hale Studios have been creating buildings, places and products that are thoughtful, effective and beautiful.

**Sussman/Prejza & Company's** (S/P) focus is the development of distinctive and successful visual communications programs for the built environment, ranging in scope and complexity. As the recognized trailblazer in this discipline, S/P's expertise can be seen in civic, cultural, corporate, sports, institutional, entertainment and retail projects around the globe. Established in 1968, S/P's work has pushed the boundaries of environmental graphic design to meld cohesively with architecture, civic planning and landscape design. S/P's most acclaimed and pioneering projects include the "look" of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, the city-wide image program for Santa Monica, CA and graphics programs for the Walt Disney Company theme parks.