

landscape architecture

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

[Subscribe](#)

[Magazine Index](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Archive](#)

[Search](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[FAQs](#)

LAM

LAND MATTERS

DRAWING

HISTORIC

MANIFESTO

RESEARCH

URBAN PARKS

Available in print edition

LETTERS

RIPRAP

ON THE BOARDS

PLANTS

DETAILS

SHARED WISDOM

BOOKS

PRODUCT PROFILES

CRITIC AT LARGE



OCTOBER 2008 ISSUE

Heads Up for Low-Flying Planes

A park is carved out amid aircraft in Santa Monica, California.

By Morris Newman

Like a plant sprouting through a crack in the pavement, the Santa Monica Airport Park appears to have broken through the asphalt and concrete of this industrial site in the West Los Angeles area. This is how a park might look if parks had wills of their own and were able to assert their greenness into a largely plant-free environment of old stucco buildings, hangars, and small aircraft tie-downs.

While a park tucked inside a general aviation airport might seem incongruous to some, none of the two dozen people present on a July afternoon seemed to notice. A succession of parents retrieved their six-year-olds from summer camp. Couples walked up and down sloping pathways on either side of this long and narrow park. Two large dogs, one yellow and the other black, lolled in the soft decomposed granite in the off-leash area, ignoring repeated calls of "come 'ere, boy." Only the soccer fields were empty, although they get plenty of use during evenings and weekends.

The popularity of the park is easy to understand: Open space is scarce in this dense residential area, where the small, oceanfront city of Santa Monica meets the larger city of Los Angeles. Although Santa Monica generally gets good marks for open space, this part of town is park starved, and the airport facility is the first new park in this rapidly growing city in 24 years. The full-to-overflowing program of dog park, tot lot, picnic tables, active green space, sports fields, plus a concrete platform for large-scale public art installations, testifies to the pent-up demand for active open space in a largely single-family neighborhood. (During opening day festivities last year, a group of Los Angeles residents picketed the park, protesting the ban on Los Angeles dogs in the Santa Monica park. Santa Monica, a socially conscious city, later opened the dog park to all, controlling crowds with a licensing system.)

Santa Monica Airport Park is a long-held, hard-won goal of the city. Prior to the



design of the park, the city hired Ah'bé Landscape Architects to create a master plan of open spaces throughout the 227-acre airport. The airport park, located just off a major boulevard, is the first open space in the master plan to be realized.

...To read the entire article, subscribe to LAM!

**What's New | LAND | Annual Meeting
Product Profiles & Directory
ASLA Online**

636 Eye Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-3736 Telephone: 202-898-2444 • Fax: 202-898-1185
©2008 American Society of Landscape Architects. All Rights Reserved.