Monterey County Administrative Office
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County and Partners Complete Pajaro Neighborhood Park

After eight years of planning and development, 10 months of construction and 20 years of anticipation, on Tuesday February 11th, the Pajaro Neighborhood Park opened to the public.

The park boasts a three-acre synthetic-turf sports field, a basketball court, two small playgrounds, picnic and barbecue areas, and a 40-foot diameter pavilion for parties, dances, and performances. This amazing space will be open to the public year round during daylight hours.

It took a collaboration between the former Redevelopment Agency of the County of Monterey, the community of Pajaro through its Redevelopment Citizen’s Advisory Committee and the firm of SSA Landscape Architects of Santa Cruz to take the neighborhood park project from concept to completion. The park is now owned and operated by the Pajaro/Sunny Mesa Community Services District (CSD).

Project History

The property had been earmarked for community use for some 20 years, and was donated to the Redevelopment Agency by Granite Construction Company in 2010. Granite also
demolished the pre-existing blighted buildings, cleared the site of garbage, debris and contaminated soil.

Despite having so much going for it, this park almost was the project that wasn’t. In 2011, the project received its conditional use permit, but when the state dissolved redevelopment agencies in 2012, the project could not move forward. Fortunately, the Board of Supervisors stepped in, agreeing to serve as the “Successor Agency” to the County Redevelopment Agency, and an Oversight Board was created. The Oversight Board and the State Department of Finance approved the continuation of the Pajaro Neighborhood Park project.

**Moving Forward**

Back on track, design plans and specifications were completed, a building permit and encroachment permit for the off-site improvements were issued. Bids for the project were awarded and construction began in April 2013.

The park showcases some special touches from local organizations. Under the direction of the Arts Council for Monterey County, students of the Ohlone Elementary School and Pajaro Middle School participated in designing a 300-foot mural that is now part of the park boundary fence. Boy Scout Troop 505 of Pajaro participated in planting the park landscaping.

The project was completed on January 28th. Ownership of the park was transferred to the Pajaro/Sunny Mesa CSD on February 11th, the same day the park opened to the public.

The park cost $6.2 million to build. Financing came from a $5 million grant from the State Department of Parks and Recreation’s Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program of 2008 (Proposition 84), and $1.2 million in Redevelopment Agency Tax Increment Funds.
“The residents of Pajaro have been waiting for more than 20 years for a project on this land, and now they have one of the finest parks in Monterey County,” says Supervisor Lou Calcagno, whose district includes the Pajaro community and who has monitored the project’s progress closely. “I am thrilled with the park, and want to compliment the redevelopment staff for the tremendous job they did getting this put together and completed.”

One county staff member is being singled out for particular praise. All those involved agree the project could not have been completed without the expert management provided by Nick Nichols, civil engineer with the Resource Management Agency. Nick was involved in the project from inception to completion. He oversaw all aspects of design, engineering, funding and construction, which was accomplished on time and under budget. He coordinated with the Pajaro/Sunny Mesa Community Services District and community outreach.

Supervisors Tour Encore Recycling

This week, Board of Supervisors members toured the Encore Recycling facility, now operating at the Firestone Business Park just south of Salinas.

The company is originally from Southern California and county departments played a key role in helping it set up shop in the Salinas Valley. Encore recycles agriculture waste plastics.

The Economic Development Department, Resource Management Agency, Health Department and the Workforce Investment Board worked together to streamline the permit process, job screening and job placement process. Encore expects to hire 100 employees this first year.

Supervisors were able to see firsthand how the company uses a state-of-the-art “closed loop” water recycling system in its environmentally safe recycling process.
District Attorney Honored for Environmental, Conservation Enforcement

Monterey County’s District Attorney recently received an award highlighting his efforts and those of this staff on behalf of environmental and conservation enforcement.

At the California District Attorneys Association conference in Monterey, Dean Flippo was recognized by Michael Sutton, President of the California Fish and Game Commission, for supporting the Department of Fish & Wildlife and its conservation mission.

“When you live in the beautiful, natural environment of Monterey County and are in a marvelous facility like the Aquarium, it is easy to understand why it is necessary for prosecutors to protect our environment,” said Flippo as he accepted the award.

“Mr. Flippo and his staff, particularly Assistant District Attorney Annie Michaels, have devoted tireless energy to wildlife protection and environmental enforcement for decades,” said Sutton, who says the DA and his staff were among the first in the state to grasp the value of California’s new statewide network of marine protected areas, which are a first in the nation. “They strongly supported the Fish and Wildlife Department’s outreach, education, and enforcement efforts when the initial marine reserves were created along the Central Coast in 2007.”

With the Monterey Bay Aquarium as a backdrop, District Attorney Dean Flippo is honored for enforcing environmental laws.