

A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there is a dirt path leading towards a wooden fence. To the left, there is a large, spiky cholla cactus. In the middle ground, there is a wooden fence made of two horizontal rails. Behind the fence, there are several large, light-colored rocks. In the background, there are green trees and a building with a wooden sign. An American flag is visible on a pole. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

Desert Discovery Park Concept Plan

Barstow, California

Acknowledgements

Desert Discovery Center

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Deborah Reardon, Nevada Field Office

Peg Henderson, Pacific West Regional Office

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Background



Left: The existing Desert Discovery Center includes an outdoor garden that is used for education and recreation. (Photos: Jane Laraman Brockhurst)

The Desert Discovery Center, which includes the Desert Discovery Park, is located in Barstow, California about 150 miles northeast of Los Angeles in the Mojave Desert. In 1970, the BLM determined this was the best location for a permanent facility based on a site feasibility study. This site was selected because it is central to managed desert lands with good access to highways, utilities and services. Over the years, the building was used as a desert information center and for office space. In 1999 it was converted into the Desert Discovery Center, serving as a center for environmental education and programming to a diverse population. The center serves 4,000 K-12 students with free environmental education and attracts over 12,500 visitors a year from the Barstow area and all over the world.

Recognizing a need to increase access to parks in this underserved community, local agencies, non-profits, schools and businesses have come together to convert a 12 acre vacant lot, located adjacent to the Desert Discovery Center, into a park that provides opportunities for trails, outdoor learning and recreation. This concept plan documents the community's vision for Desert Discovery Park and provides a blueprint for completion.

About the Partnership

The Desert Discovery Center (DDC) and Park, a 7,000 square foot facility and its surrounding 12 acres, are owned by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Barstow Field Office and operated through a unique partnership between government, educational, and nonprofit organizations. In March of 2000, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Barstow Community College, the Barstow Unified School District, and the Mojave River Valley Museum to further their goals of natural resource awareness through environment-based education. The MOU is the overall guiding document explaining roles and commitments of the various partners. The agreement is flexible and was amended several times to add new partners or clarify roles. Partners now include the BLM, Barstow Unified School District, Barstow Community College, City of Barstow, National Park Service, Main Street Murals, National Parks Conservation Association, Off Limits Design, Mojave Desert and Mountain Recycling Authority, Edison International, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors - First and Third Districts, and St. Paul's Academy. Partners work collaboratively to provide environmental education, contribute funding for facility operations, write grant applications, prepare interpretive displays, create public art, and promote the DDC.



Above: Visitors learn about square foot gardening at the existing native plant and animal habitat area. (Photo: Peg Henderson) Right: Youth create "crazy cactus" at the Desert Discovery Center. (Photo: Jane Laraman Brockhurst)



Existing Facilities

The existing Desert Discovery Center building includes two classroom spaces, an information desk, exhibits, such as the famous "Old Woman Meteorite," and a gift shop that totals 7,000 square feet. A native plant and animal garden habitat outside is protected by a high wall. The adjacent Desert Discovery Park land includes a covered picnic area, rough-graded trails, and shade structures.

In 2010, planning began on a \$700,000 renovation project to retrofit the building with a new roof and HVAC system, and to remodel the classroom and exhibit areas. This renovation establishes the Desert Discovery Center as the first BLM building in California with LEED certification.

Existing Educational Programs

The DDC currently offers two environmental education programs through various stewardship, recreation and art projects. The Junior Explorer Program, offered throughout the school year, is operated through field trips to the DDC. Elementary and intermediary schools in the area travel to the DDC for half-day or whole-day programs that teach students about subjects ranging from biology and botany to Leave No Trace outdoor ethics and the Closing the Loop resource conservation curriculum. All programs meet California State Educational Standards, but are intentionally more hands-on than a traditional classroom setting. During the summer, the DDC offers the Junior Explorer Summer Day Camp, which is similar to the scholastic program in that it offers some of the same curriculum. It differs, however, in that kids participate for a week at a time and each class is supplemented with a field trip to reinforce what they have learned in the classroom setting.

The DDC partnership is also a member of a nationwide environmental education program called Hands on the Land (HOL). HOL is a network of field classrooms connecting students, teachers, and parents to their public lands. Working with HOL, the DDC site has hands-on educational programs in natural and cultural settings that have been developed in partnership with local schools. The programs are designed to support established school curriculum and local standards of learning as well as agency resource management objectives.

With most classes drawing from the High Desert region, the partnership is able to provide limited transportation. The partners are developing a transportation plan to increase student access to programs and special outings.

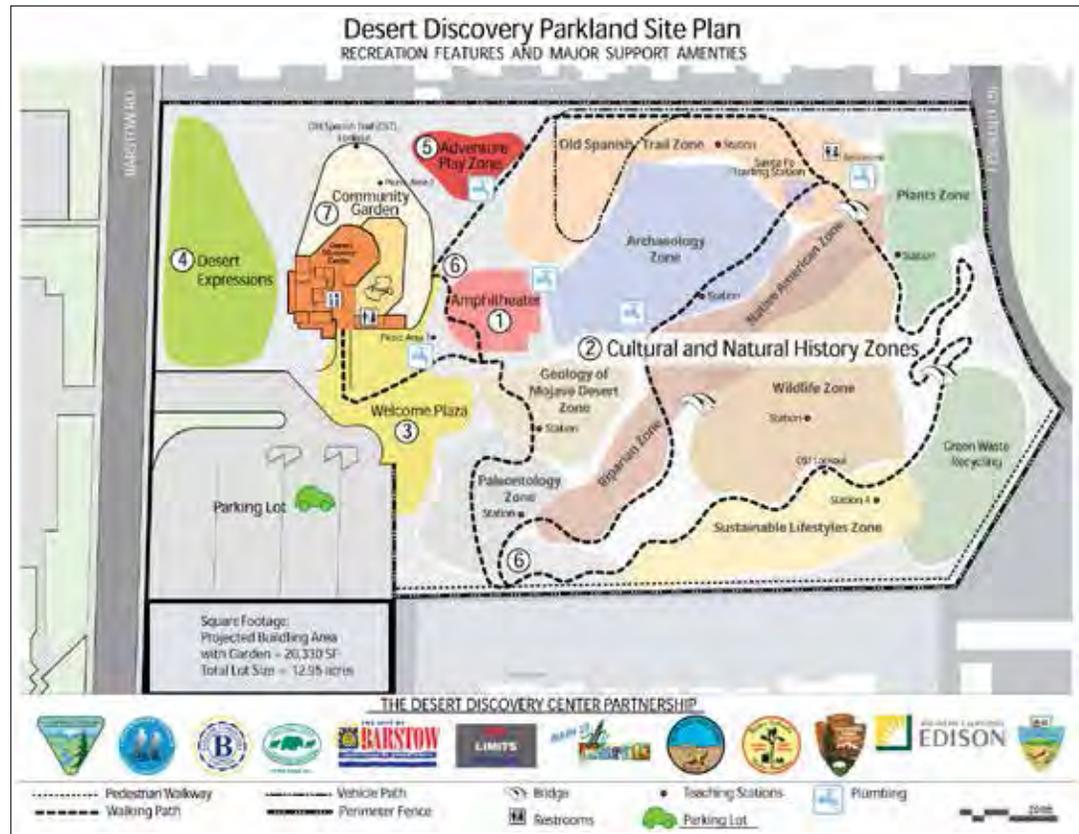
Park Planning & Community Engagement

Between December 9, 2009 and March 23, 2011, a series of 11 community meetings were held with a total of 345 people attending. While two of the meetings had over 100 in attendance, most were smaller meetings. Participants evaluated current recreational opportunities in Barstow, and were introduced to the idea of the proposed Desert Discovery Park. Groups were asked to suggest features and activities that would be important to include in this new park. Participants then divided into teams to evaluate suggestions and rank them in order of importance.

The partnership originally envisioned the space as a place to conduct outdoor environmental education and programming using a number of teaching stations connected by a loop trail around the property. However, the community planning meetings revealed that Barstow residents would like to have access to the space for walking, an outdoor performance amphitheater, natural and cultural history interpretation, and the demonstration of xeric landscaping. Leading ideas generated through these meetings also included a trail for recreation and fitness, restrooms, a community garden, and a concession stand. The Desert Discovery Parkland Site Plan and related interpretive themes were developed based on this community input.

In order to further the design and leverage future funding, the Partnership applied for and received technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program in October 2011. During 2011-2013, RTCA contributed facilitation, planning and landscape design skills and collaborated with the Partnership and key community leaders in order to develop the Desert Discovery Park Concept Plan.

The DDC partnership is also working with the City of Barstow to create a Healthy Community network of pedestri-



The Desert Discovery Parkland Site Plan above was developed through a series of community meetings and served as a foundation for the Concept Plan on page 7.

an/bicycle paths and trails. The idea is to provide a series of safe paths to school for children, and a system of trails enabling people to easily get around the community. The trail system will provide for basic transportation and opportunities for residents to exercise, have fun and socialize. The first segment of the potential trail system links the Barstow Community Hospital, the Desert Discovery Center and City Hall. This trail will serve as the core piece which will ultimately extend out to other community facilities and sites. The trails may use existing roads, right-of-ways and easements. New components may include bike lanes and trails along drainages and washes.

Goals and Objectives

As described in the Desert Discovery Center Five Year Development Plan (September 15, 2010 Draft), the Partnership has agreed on the following goals and objectives, which provided a framework for conceptual plan design:

Goals

- Create a long-term setting at the DDC in Barstow to provide nature based education and public interpretation, with new interpretive themes, features and displays.
- Develop sustainable outdoor classroom facilities, amenities, and interpretive features that serve regional schools, and are open for public enjoyment.
- Complete renovations and repairs for the existing facility to function as a high performance, sustainable building, providing a healthy work environment.

Objectives

1. Create outdoor nature education facilities on adjacent 8 acres of public land, and renovate existing facilities using sustainable design concepts.
2. Manage the setting to maximize natural desert appearance for kids to get outdoors.
3. Develop a fully accessible nature trail winding around the outdoor classroom site linking the teaching stations to the building and other developed features.
4. Construct seven teaching stations spaced out along the nature trail. Design them with themed features; trail & teaching stations are to be open to public outside class time.
5. Develop an interpretive plan aligned with the Bureau's mission and incorporating the needs and goals of the partner organizations. Create new displays and interpretive features for the building, the outdoor classroom, and adjoining outside areas.
6. Develop an RV campsite to support a site host, volunteer, or temporary employee.
7. Improve circulation patterns with ADA compliant pathways and by removing or modifying walls, barriers, gates or doors; maintain property & building security.
8. Follow and comply with design standards comparable to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program; comply with 2005 Energy Policy Act, Executive Order 13423 (sustainable facilities), and follow Bureau and GSA sustainable design guidance.
9. Apply wise water use principles; reduce use of filtered water by harvesting rain water to irrigate landscaping, reducing runoff and lowering heat effect.
10. Apply best business practices and create opportunities for public participation.

Site Analysis

Location

The Desert Discovery Center property fronts Barstow Road and is adjacent to Helen Runyon Drive. The property is situated on a hill with panoramic desert views and is clustered among city parks, community center, museum, government agencies, and medical facilities. Residences are located to the north and apartments to the southeast of the site. The location is central to students, parents, teachers, visitors and partners with easy access to I-15.

Access

The public can easily access the site from both the upper, west side, where the Center parking lot is located, and the lower, eastern end, from Helen Runyon Drive. Vehicular access to the site is possible from both sides, and should be maintained for construction, emergencies and for operations and maintenance. Access to the power/phone lines along the north property line is guaranteed by a utility right-of-way.

The project partners will need to coordinate with the city on the planned road widening project along Helen Runyon Drive to ensure that a curb cut is provided for a future driveway and/or pullout. The rest of the site is accessible via existing dirt pathways, most of which are currently ADA compliant.

Topography

The site is comprised of ridges and washes that generally slope from southwest to northeast, with a grade change of approximately 80 feet. The high point of the site is located at the south end of the parking lot and the low point is at the northeast corner. The other uses planned for the northeast corner—maintenance and emergency access, and key interpretive elements—will need to be planned in coordination with the drainage outlet/management for the site.

Existing Recreation Uses

In 2008, seven shade structures were constructed using funding from the BLM's "Take It Outside" initiative. These outdoor teaching areas provide students that attend the DDC programs the opportunity to interact more directly with the desert environment they are learning about. An informal trail accessed by community members follows the main drainage to cross the site.

Drainage

Most runoff is probably generated by the adjacent parking lot, which is graded to drain to the Barstow Road system. The rest of the developed site, the center, and solar panels also drain to Barstow Road. The remainder of the site drains to the east, down several natural swales. As noted above, the collection of site drainage at the northeast corner is an opportunity to implement alternative storm water management practices.

Natural Resources

The site is sparsely vegetated, mostly with creosote bush. According to a historical plant list developed through a 1976 environmental study, over 25 plant species were once located on the site.



Native plants such as the Creosote Bush and Grayball Sage were historically located on the site. (Photos: Charles Webber © California Academy of Sciences, Gerald and Buff Corsi © California Academy of Sciences)

Concept Plan



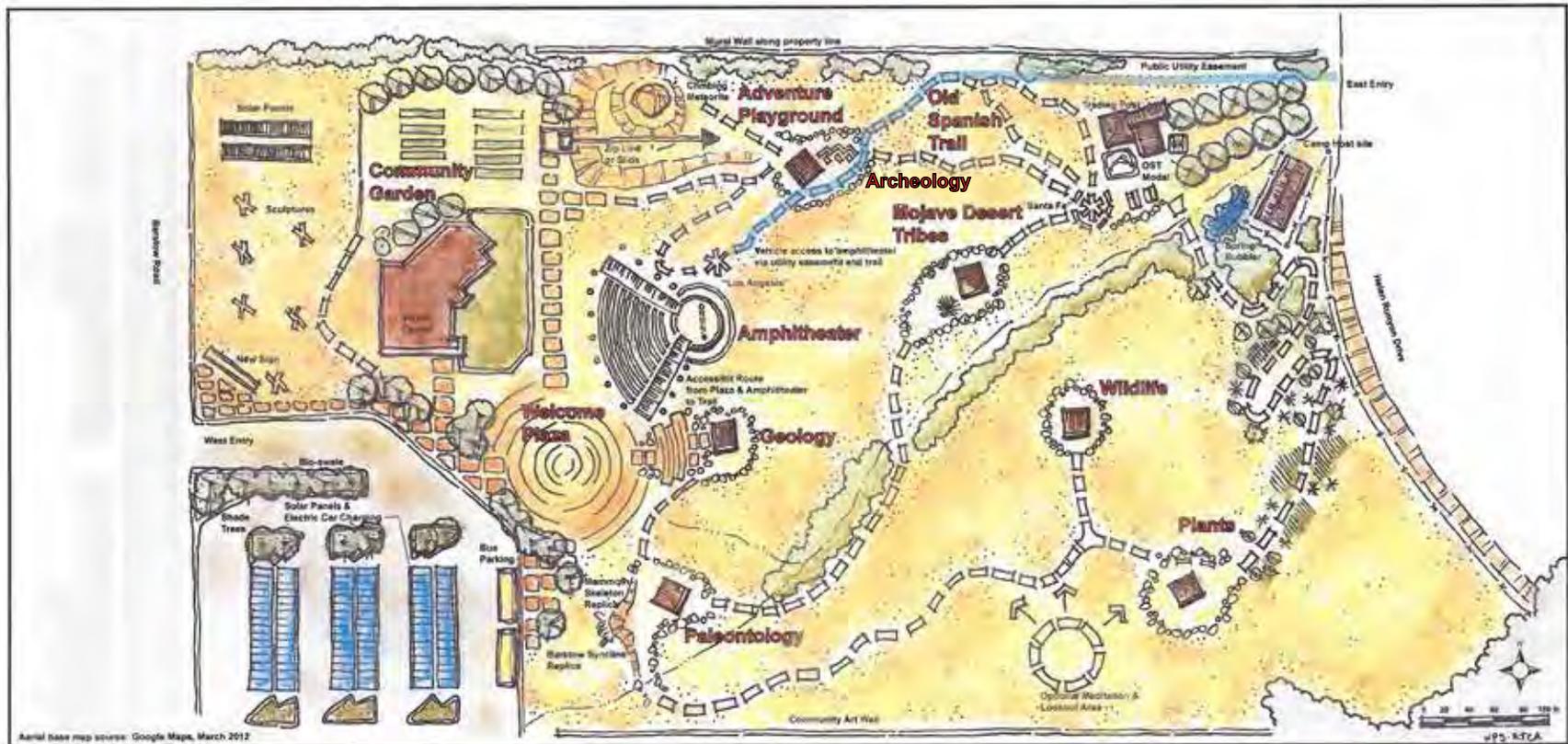
The Conceptual Plan includes a 0.25 mile trail located along a series of stations where visitors enjoy activities such as learning about gardening and native plants, gliding on a zip line, or enjoying unique wildlife sculptures educational displays. (Beaver-tail Cactus Photo: Mark W. Skinner; Community Garden Photo: Jane Laraman-Brockhurst; Zip Line Photo: Peg Henderson; Snake Sculpture by Mark Brest van Kempen, Photo by Peg Henderson)

The future Desert Discovery Park is envisioned to include a loop trail that connects themed activity areas and teaching stations addressing topics in environmental sciences, local history and sustainability. Along the way, benches, exercise stations, interpretive panels, and public art developed through a community arts program provide Barstow's residents with an experience stimulating to both mind and body. Barstow's first outdoor amphitheater and an adventure play area meet community needs identified during public meetings. Additionally, water-saving landscaping including drip-irrigation along with informative signage serve as a demonstration garden for residents. Sustainable materials and building methods are used as much as possible.

The site is divided into the following eleven zones that provide opportunities for recreation and learning:

- Site Entry and Welcome Plaza
- Amphitheater
- Community Garden
- Adventure Play
- Geology
- Paleontology
- Wildlife
- Plants and Riparian
- Mojave Desert Tribes
- Archeology
- Old Spanish Trail

Descriptions for each zone shown on pages 8-20 are in present tense in order to communicate the Partnership's vision for Desert Discovery Park. Please note that most of the park elements are not in existence today, but are envisioned for the future.



Desert Discovery Park
 Barstow, California
Concept Plan
 September 2012

Figure 1: Conceptual Plan

Site Entry and Welcome Plaza



The east entry along Helen Runyon Drive will be enhanced with an alley of shade trees. (Photo: Terry Moore, courtesy of the American Society of Landscape Architects)

West Entry

This is the main entrance to the site and includes new signage, desert themed sculptures, and a series of welcome flags along the Barstow Road frontage. The parking lot, resurfaced with a permeable paving, is planted with shade trees and bioswales collect runoff in existing parkways. Bus parking is provided and clear pathways lead visitors to the Welcome Plaza and onto the amphitheater, visitor center, community garden and the extensive trail system.

Welcome Plaza

This area welcomes visitors from the Barstow Road entrance and extends into the parking lot, leading to the visitor center and park. The park mission is displayed and visitors are inspired to explore and share the creative community involvement with art installations inspired by the region's natural and cultural resources. A mosaic art installation provides an overview of the park showing traffic flow and features with bright colorful designs created by local students. The east section of the welcome plaza overlooks the park. Picnic tables and benches are situated in close proximity to the restrooms. Solar panels in the parking lot that provide shade and electricity may also be considered.

East Entry

This location is enhanced with a pathway lined with shade trees, leading from the street to the focal point of this end of the site. The "Trading Post" with vending machines, restrooms, shade structure, interpretive signs, and a campfire ring serve as a jumping off point for the Old Spanish Trail. Also located at this entry is the camp host site, which is screened to minimize its visual impact to the site. A roadway along the existing utility easement provides vehicular access to the amphitheater.

Camp Host Site

Parking for a recreational vehicle is located in the north-east corner of the site with access from Helen Runyon Drive. The concept shows a pad approximately 20 by 60 feet, covered with a shade structure and surrounded on three sides by privacy/security screening of a design that would fit the site. An area for growing wild grapes may also be provided as part of the shade and/or screening here. The pad surface material should be suitable for a variety of mobile housing types. The exact location of the pad will need to be coordinated with the city's planned widening of Helen Runyon Drive.

DDC Leads: Bureau of Land Management, Main Street Murals, Off Limits Design



Welcome Plaza illustration depicts potential art installations. (Artwork: David Brockhurst)

Amphitheater



Design concept for the amphitheater provides shade and seating. (Photo: Bill Timmerman, courtesy of American Society of Landscape Architects)

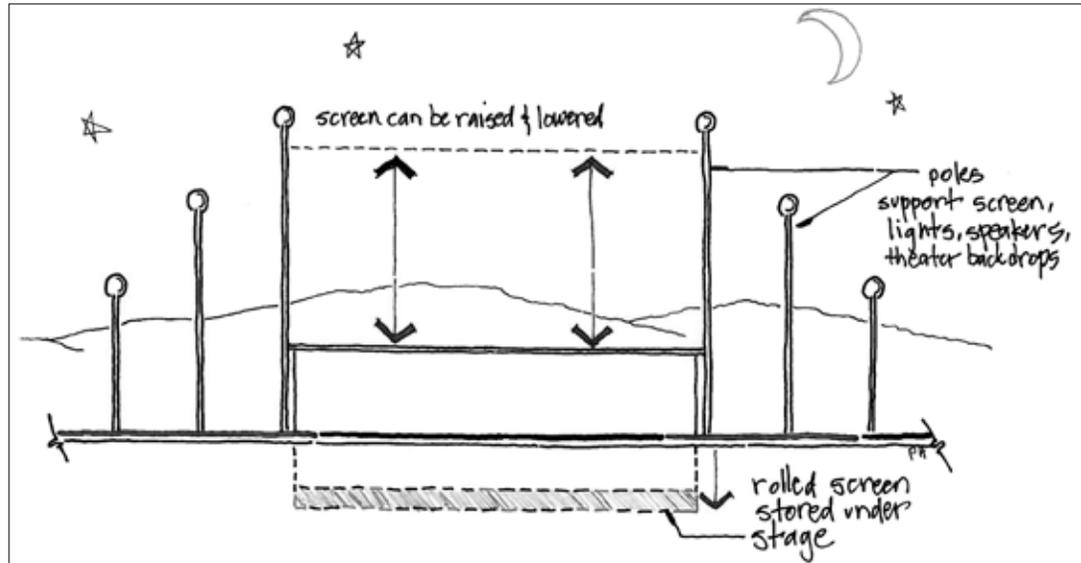
Positioned in the heart of the park and directly adjacent to the Welcome Plaza is a 200 seat amphitheater. The amphitheater acts as a central focus of the park and offers a platform to present open air performances, lectures and workshops to compliment park-related themes. An extremely valuable space for special events and outdoor classroom activities, this first open air theater for Barstow is intended to be used by a variety of community groups for public presentations and arts-related performances including music, drama, dance and cinema.

The amphitheater is designed to fit into the landscape to minimize grading. An accessible pathway curves around the north side of the amphitheater to reach the stage level and provides access for equipment and materials. Vehicular access is provided from the east side along the north boundary. Basic sound and lighting is designed for mobility and easy erection. The construction of the am-

phitheater presents an opportunity to showcase sustainable design. One example to consider is Khalili pounded earth construction, an inexpensive natural building method that creates structures which are both strong and easy to build. Due to the proximity of residences, potential impacts of noise and lighting are considered during design and management, such as setting reasonable hours of operation and minimizing lighting glare.

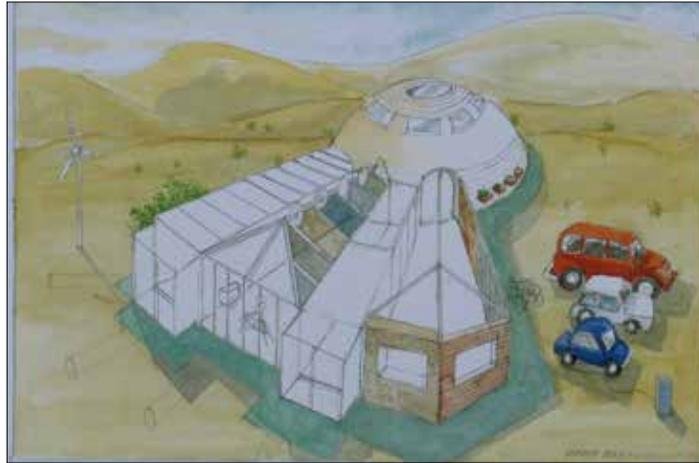
Community park sponsors are recognized through company or family inscribed nameplates for seats in the amphitheater. Similar path stones with inscribed donor names are used throughout park and welcome area to raise funds and demonstrate support.

DDC Leads: Main Street Murals, Off Limits Design, Cal Earth



Sound, lighting and screens are designed to minimize impacts to the site and adjacent neighbors.

Community Garden



Sustainable building methods are demonstrated within the garden. (Artwork: David Brockhurst)

The community garden, hosted by the Master Composters group, offers a space where the community can learn about gardening and composting in the desert, participate in workshops, join the volunteer gardening group and help support long term maintenance of the landscaping on site. The community garden is part of an effort to inform the community about healthy eating options and give people the tools to either grow their own vegetables at home or join the gardening team on site at the Desert Discovery Center. This community garden is the first in Barstow and provides information and experience in gardening and sustainability and opportunities to form a new group of volunteers to assist in care of park plants.

The community garden is designed to sit adjacent to the existing native garden and extend to a lookout point on the northwest side of the park. There is room for raised planting beds, tool storage, composting, group discussions and classes. The garden is accessible but, if needed, can be fenced for security and to protect from animal

damage without impacting the rest of the site. An area within the community garden demonstrates low-use water management and drip irrigation for home use, possibly through a grey water pool or a low maintenance water recycling example. Programs may include a seed exchange and native plant workshops.

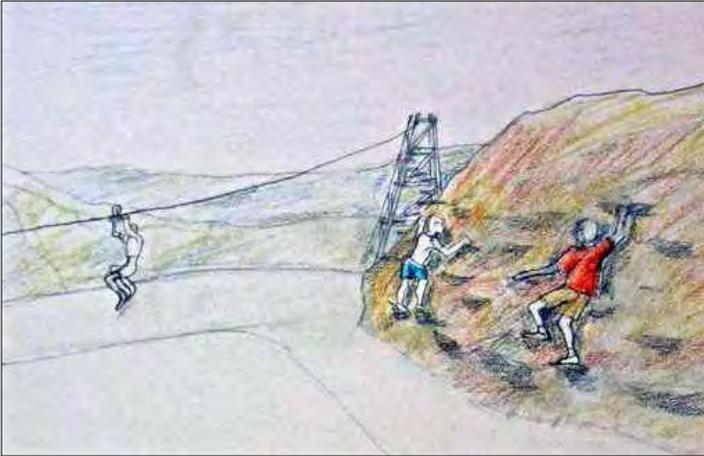
Sustainable lifestyles are also featured in this zone, where traditional and emerging sustainable design and energy techniques being utilized in the desert are highlighted. These include recycled and sustainable design, adobe, rammed earth, solar and wind energy. The community is encouraged to get involved in small scale sustainable design and building projects around the park as well as in workshops by the DDC design team. It is our hope that we can also include examples of emerging sustainable energy exhibits with the assistance from energy partners who specialize in this field. Throughout the park and the DDC, exhibit panels demonstrate where and how sustainable design techniques have been used.

Learn more

Southern California Edison Energy Education Center, located in Irwindale, CA is an invaluable resource for residential, commercial and industrial customers, providing seminars and workshops in conjunction with over 50,000 square feet of hands-on demonstrations and displays, technical consultations, and a resource library containing program and rebate information. View and read about the displays and exhibits, including Smart Energy Experience™, Daylight Center, Foodservice Technology Center, Innovation Center, Lighting Center, Sustainability Center, and Electromagnetic Field Lab and Power Quality Center or view the virtual tour video at sce.com/energycenters.

DDC Leads: Master Composters, City of Barstow and Square Foot Gardening Team, Edison International

Adventure Play



This area is set aside in a nook with a natural bowl. A zip line is installed with the uphill anchor point near the community garden on the pathway to the north lookout. Participants fly through the atmosphere on a small-scale zip line, passing the meteor model/climbing rock and landing in a soft “crater” at the low end of the play area. If a zip line is not considered feasible, an alternative would be a long slide. This sustainable design play area uses natural and recycled materials.

DDC Leads: Bureau of Land Management, Fort Irwin (manpower and materials)

The adventure play area includes a climbing rock and small scale zip line. (Artwork: David Brockhurst)



A simple zip line that traverses short distance with a low grade change, as shown by this example from the Adventure Playground in Berkeley, CA, is envisioned. A concrete slide is a viable alternative to a zipline. (Photos: Peg Henderson)

Geology



Park visitors will learn about the Barstow Syncline at Rainbow Basin Natural Area. (Photo: Jane Laraman-Brockhurst)

The geology station is in a transition area between a highly developed part of the site (the amphitheater) and the more rugged feeling of the trail and stations on the rest of the site. The grade change between the welcome plaza/amphitheater and the geology station suggests that paved steps and ramps might be the best way to move between these areas. The steps can be designed in a way that evokes the geology of the region – materials, imprinted words, concrete seat walls, boulders on either side of the steps to emulate the feeling of a canyon, or other structures that are formed to model geologic formations. The geology station may also be connected to the visitors' center and amphitheater through trails; how-

ever, more detailed design is needed in order to ensure that these trails comply with ADA.

The natural formation of the land in this park area lends itself to show how the forces of nature have shaped the earth with examples of different rock formations. Significant rock formations in the Barstow area attract researchers and tourist alike, most notably the Barstow Syncline at the nearby Rainbow Basin Natural Area, which extends to Calico Ghost Town.

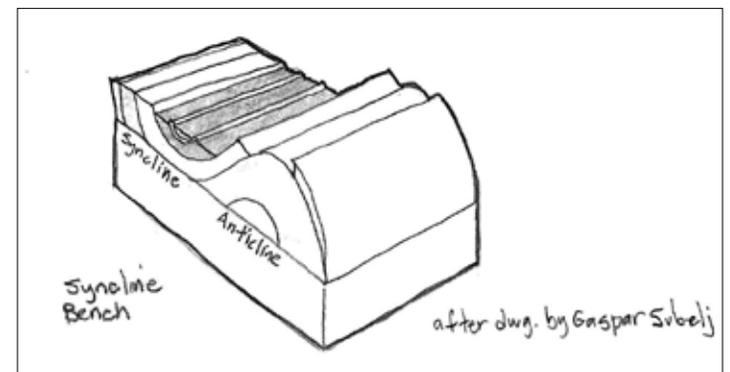
Programming may include a small presentation of a local rock formation, directing viewers into the DDC for guides and maps to explore these areas in the desert and learn about the role of water in the desert and features including cinder cones, prehistoric lakes and present day dry lake beds. Visitors may also learn about the geology of the Mojave Desert and the Old Woman Meteorite.

Learn more

<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/barstow/meteorite.html>

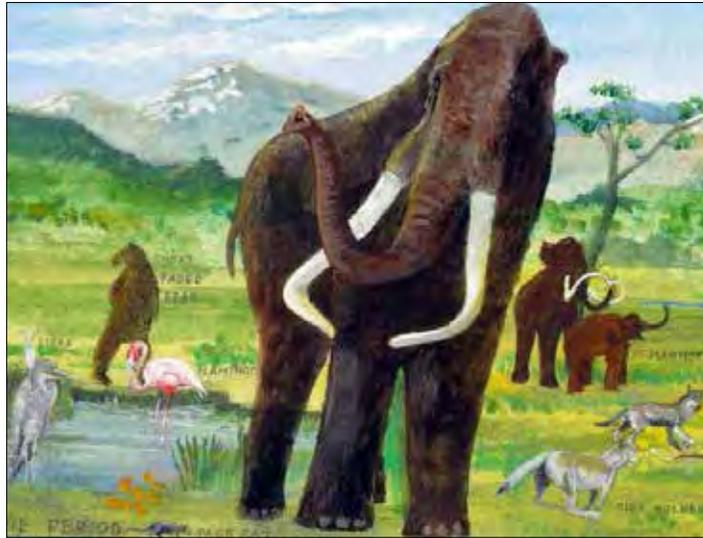
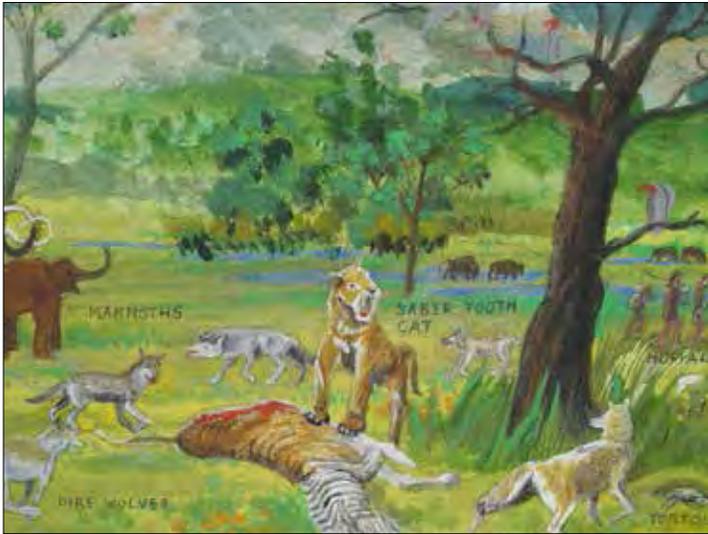
<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/barstow/basin.html>

DDC Lead: Bureau of Land Management



The Bench design is inspired by synclines, a significant rock formation.

Paleontology

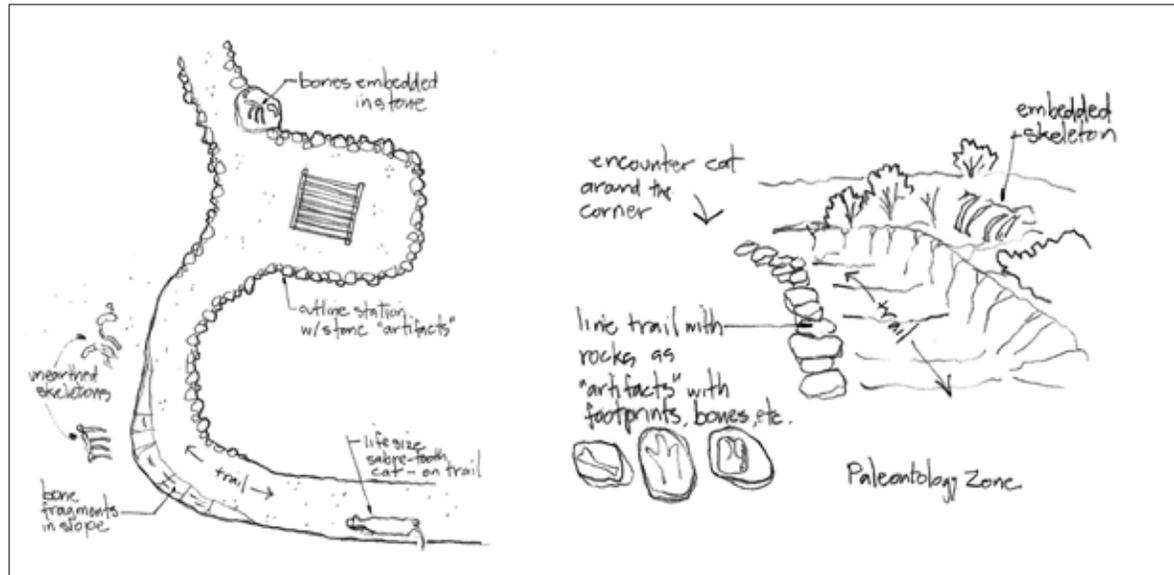


Artwork: David Brockhurst

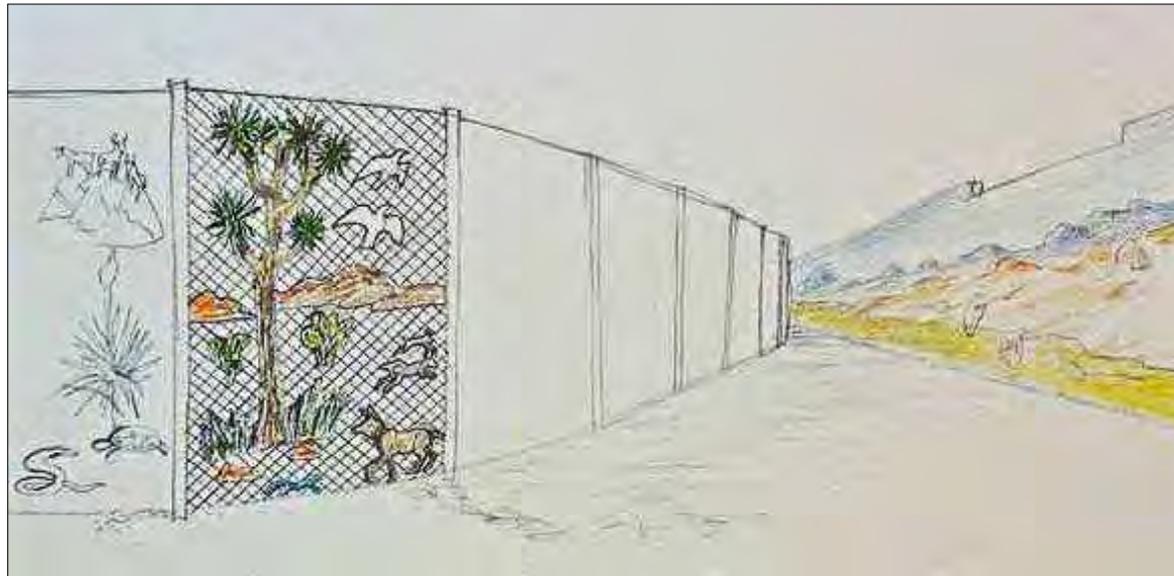
As the earth has evolved and changed over time, so too have the animals that inhabit it. Unearthing the past is the theme of this station with a focus on the Ice Age and the animals that roamed the desert region of that time. This subject is supported by numerous paleontology finds and examples of mammoth, saber-toothed cat, and dire wolf found in our region. The paleontology station includes an abundance of 'fossils' in the rocks lining the trail, surrounding the shade structure, and in the cut slopes of the site. A Mammoth skeleton is being unearthed uphill from the trail, and rounding a corner, visitors come face to face with a replica of a prehistoric wild animal, such as a saber-toothed cat or mountain lion that may be located on or near the trail. Ice Age animal footprints are also shown along the stretch of the trail.

The production of these models and other art installations throughout the park is supported by programs at the DDC. A community art wall located on the southern wall provides an opportunity for education and a scenic backdrop for the paleontology, wildlife, plant and riparian zones.

DDC Lead: San Bernardino County

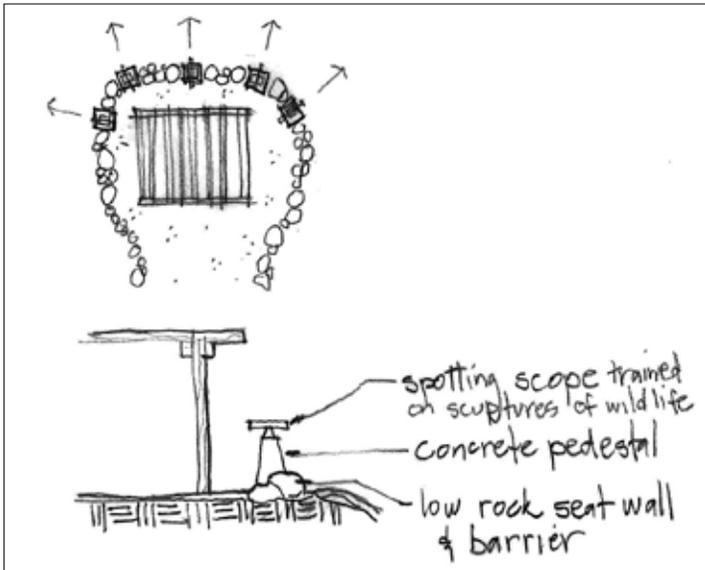


Trail through the paleontology zone includes interpretive elements, such as artifacts and wildlife replicas.



Community art wall at the southern boundary provides a scenic backdrop. (Artwork: David Brockhurst)

Wildlife (Fauna)



Spotting scopes provide views of metal wildlife sculptures located within the natural landscape.

The Mojave Desert climate is hot and dry. Desert plants and animals are highly adapted to thrive in this seemingly harsh climate. Animal adaptation is a running theme throughout the park, where visitors learn the importance of being prepared when exploring the desert by comparing animal adaptation in the desert to human survival skills.

Wildlife is interpreted at one of the best vantage points on the site. To take advantage of this, several spotting scopes, or permanent binoculars, are installed which are trained on metal sculptures of wildlife around the site and interpretive plates will highlight the facts of these animals and show their unique qualities.

DDC Lead: National Park Service

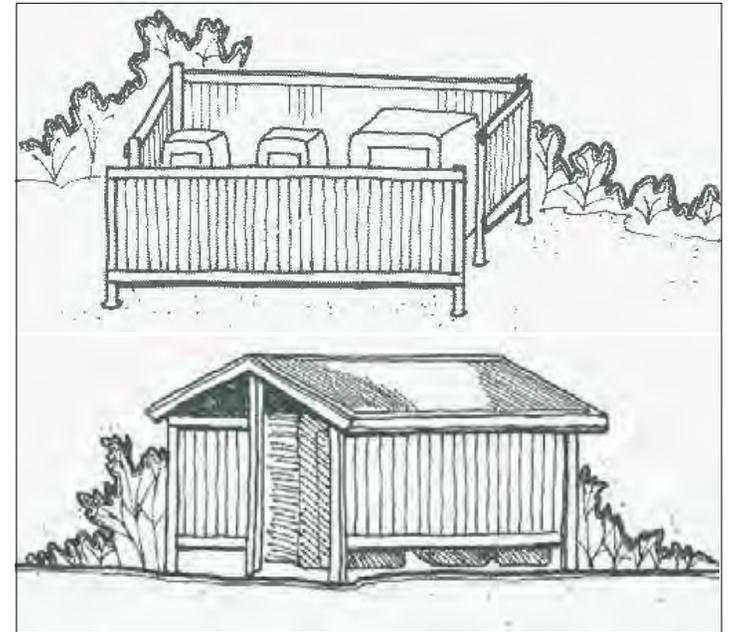


Metal sculptures, concrete monoliths and spotting scopes are integrated into educational signage and landscaping. (Top: Sculptures and photo by Bill Siebersma, taken at the High Desert Trail System, New Mexico; Middle and Bottom: Sculptures by Mark Brest van Kempen and photos by Peg Henderson, taken along the Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt in Oakland, CA)

Plants (Flora) and Riparian

Plants are interpreted at the southernmost shade structure with signs and other educational props that provide examples of plants' cultural and medicinal uses over the years by local tribes, early explorers, and present day inhabitants. The concepts of plant communities and ecological niches is illustrated along the descending trail with plant types progressing from high to low elevation adapted species. The trail ends in the relatively lush riparian zone including a water feature, such as a bubbler or artificial spring, at the bottom of the slope. The aim is to create a beautiful and peaceful area that informs the general public on the multitude of native desert plants and encourages people to use drought tolerant plants for their own landscaping at home. This area is midpoint and we would encourage people to sit, meditate and peacefully enjoy this zone. Additionally, a portable restroom will be adjacent to this zone, concealed through screening.

DDC Leads: Master Composters, Mojave Desert Recycling, City of Barstow, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management



Portable restrooms located along the plant and riparian zone are concealed through screening.

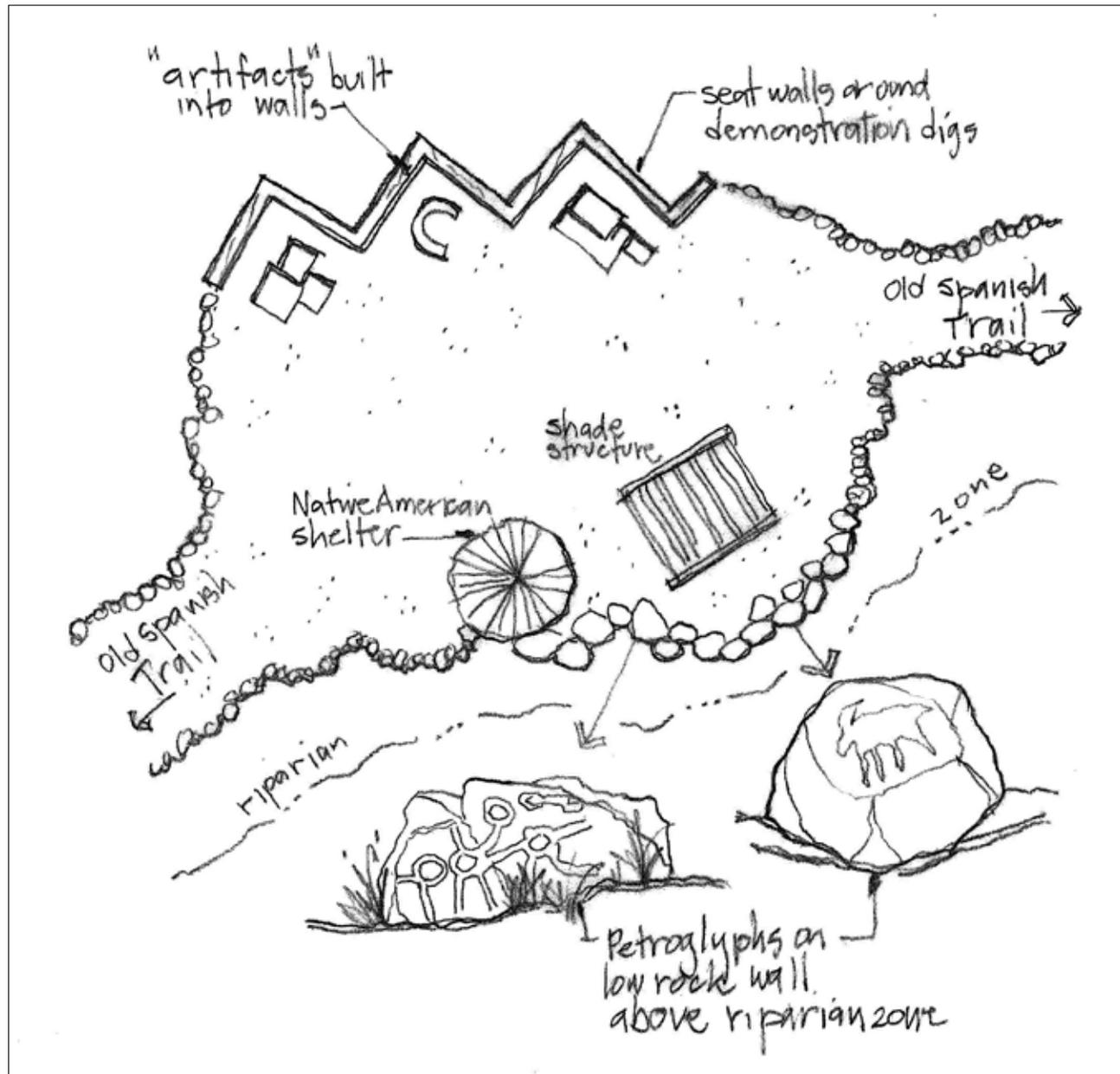
Mojave Desert Tribes



Artwork: David Brockhurst

The Mojave Desert Tribes site is located next to the dry wash and the plants and riparian zone, a location which reflects the importance of water to desert communities. Planners will consult with Mojave, Chemehuevi, and Vanyume Serrano Tribes in the development of the area with the goal of providing visitors the opportunity to learn about the tribal life ways of several hundred years ago. A small scale village provides examples of shelter, clothing manufacture, hunting, food gathering and preparation, trade, and children's play activities. This area demonstrates the innovative adaptive methods of desert tribes and their impacts on the desert environment. Exhibit panels will highlight the continuing contributions of these tribes to our desert community.

DDC Leads: National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Main Street Murals, Off Limits Design



Replicas of local tribe artifacts are integrated into seating walls and a low rock retaining wall in the Mojave Desert tribes and paleontology zones.

Archeology



Artwork: David Brockhurst

The archaeology station will highlight another aspect of unearthing the past to reveal human history. BLM archeology staff will guide the creation of an archaeological dig site to use as a demonstration workshop space for BLM land stewardship classes and Junior Naturalist classes and to show the general public an example of a “real” dig site. Replicas of various artifacts will be reproduced at the Desert Discovery Center by the art team in conjunction with a youth program. These artifact replicas are linked to the Mojave Desert tribes and Old Spanish Trail zones, located north and south of this area. Artifacts may include pottery, a mission bell, foundations of a mission, a small chest, and American Indian artifacts, such as mano and metate.

DDC Leads: Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service

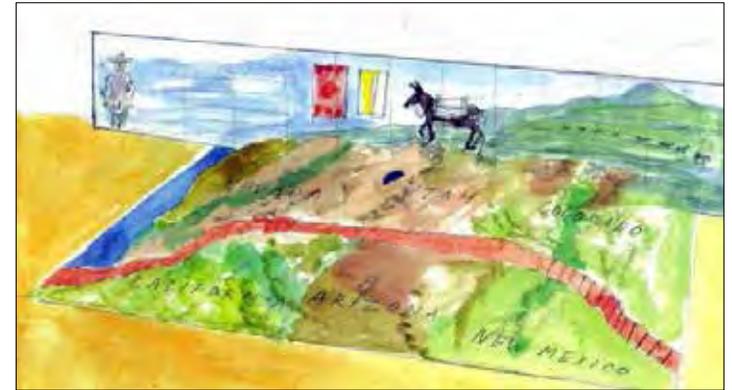
Old Spanish Trail

Barstow has been at the axes of a vital transportation corridor for 10,000 years. The Old Spanish Trail, part of the National Historic Trail System, was an important horse and burro pack trade route between Santa Fe and Los Angeles that passed through Barstow as it followed the Mojave River.

The Old Spanish Trail route is represented in this area to help visitors understand the long distance and varied terrain involved in the journey. The starting point (Santa Fe) coincides with the campfire ring next to the shade structure and the trading post, which provides an orientation to the Old Spanish Trail through a tactile relief map. The end point (Los Angeles) is next to the amphitheater. Exhibit panels highlight the importance of rivers, canyons and other features in dictating the route, how native trails evolved into the route, food sources and trade.

The route could be depicted through a model superimposed on a section of trail. The model would be located in conjunction with other built elements, such as the trading post, in order to leave more of the site as “open landscape”. A wall running along the north edge of the site from the northeast entrance to the play area supports murals depicting the Old Spanish Trail and other desert elements. Screening plants are installed along this wall, interspersed with the mural artwork, to soften the line of the wall and to provide privacy for adjacent homes.

DDC lead: Old Spanish Trail Association, BLM, Off Limits Design



The Old Spanish Trail could be depicted through a model superimposed on a section of the trail. (Artwork: David Brockhurst)

Next Steps

Using the Desert Discovery Park Conceptual Plan as a shared vision, the Partnership plans to develop an action plan and funding strategy in order to ensure implementation. The following preliminary implementation actions have been identified:

- Complete a survey and accurate topographic map. The current conceptual plan is based on site visits and aerial photography. However, a more detailed topographic map is needed for the next level of design to ensure accurate trail and facility siting.
- Obtain the official alignment for the utility easement located on the northern edge of the site. This information is needed in order to complete a final design.
- Develop an interpretive plan that includes themes, sign concepts, and icons or logos for each teaching station.
- Identify implementation priorities and phases.

For more information or to get involved in the Desert Discovery Park project, please contact:

Bureau of Land Management
Barstow Field Office
2601 Barstow Rd.
Barstow, CA 92311
(760) 252-6000



Desert Discovery Center Partnership: Barstow Community College • Barstow Unified School District • Bureau of Land Management
City of Barstow • Edison International • Main Street Murals • Friends of Desert Discovery Center
Mojave Desert & Mountain Recycling Integrated Waste Management Joint Powers Authority • National Park Service
National Parks Conservation Association • Off Limits Design • San Bernardino County • St. Paul's Academy