



FACILITY PROFILE

PARK FURNISHINGS

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A Park for All

TODD BEAMER PARK

FRESNO, CALIF.

DAWN KLINGENSMITH

In the end, Todd Beamer stood for patriotism, decisive action and heroic sacrifice. But before he uttered that now-famous call to action—"Let's roll"—on United Airlines Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001, Todd Beamer stood for family. He also loved sports and believed in the importance of staying fit and involving kids in physical activities.

On Feb. 26, 2010, Todd Beamer Park in Fresno, Calif., opened to the public. Planning for the long-awaited park began in 2004.

"It memorializes what he did and what he stood for. From everything I've heard, he believed in providing sports opportunities for kids," said landscape architect Corbin Schneider of Verde Design, the Santa Clara, Calif.-based firm that designed the park.

Todd Beamer Park provides sports opportunities and more. About six acres of vacant land were developed into the neighborhood park memorializing the man whose actions helped prevent hijackers on Sept. 11 from slamming into another target.

After Flight 93 was hijacked, passengers making calls with in-plane and cell phones learned of the attacks on the World Trade Center. Beamer, a 32-year-old husband, father and businessman, used the phone on the back of a plane seat to report to an operator what was happening onboard, including plans to storm the cockpit, overpower the hijackers and fly the plane into the ground if necessary. Beamer's last audible words before carrying out that plan were, "Are you guys ready? Let's roll."

At least three other facilities have been named for Beamer, including a New Jersey post office, a Washington high school and a student center at his alma mater, Wheaton College in Illinois. Besides Beamer's heroism, his namesake park honors his love of sports and the two semesters he spent at California State University in Fresno.

The park sits on 6.4 acres and includes lighted basketball courts and soccer fields, a skatepark, a water play area, a shaded play area, a picnic pavilion, barbecue pits, a shaded game table, a circular path with exercise stations, a dog park, restrooms and a parking lot.

But though the park is named for Beamer, it's very much the neighborhood's park.

Beamer would have liked that, and the way the park came about as part of a democratic process guided by community input. As such, people of all ages can find something in the park geared to them, Schneider said, though kids were top of mind as the project developed.

The vacant lot had been intended as a park for years, with money being raised through residential development fees. Having waited so long, the city moved forward without sufficient funds to pay for everything on the community's wish list, with plans to add amenities as funds became available. Neighbors helped with the prioritizing.

However, bids came in lower than expected, making it possible for the park to be built in its entirety, at a cost of \$2.7 million. So from the day it opened, it had something for everybody.

"It's for kids, it's for families, it's for empty nesters and grandparents," Schneider said.

Interestingly, "The neighbors who live right up against the park don't have kids, but they were totally in favor of the park," especially since designers solicited their input, he explained. They were the ones who pushed for the dog park and a safe, open path with exercise stations for all ability levels. They also wanted benches so they could comfortably watch the children at play, Schneider said.

And though homeowners sometimes get "uptight" about skateparks, "this neighborhood was all for it," he added.

The skatepark was designed and built by Wormhoudt Inc., Santa Cruz, Calif., and the water play components were designed and manufactured by Water Odyssey, San Marcos, Texas. Shade Structures, based in Dallas and Costa Mesa, Calif., provided the shade covers, and CXT's Sacramento, Calif.-based West regional office provided the concrete building for the restrooms.

Site furnishings, including bollards, bike racks, trash receptacles, recycled plastic picnic tables and benches, and the game table, were manufactured by DuMor.

"It is a well-designed park. The city and landscape architects created a beautiful neighborhood park that brings the community together," said Cheri Yokoi of Ross Recreation Equipment, the Santa Rosa, Calif.-based company that supplied the DuMor site furnishings and Landscape Structures play equipment.

Indeed, "We designed it so whether you're a dog person or a basketball player, you have your specific activity area where you can do your thing and not be bothered and where you won't interfere with anyone else," Schneider said.

Of all the places named in Beamer's honor, Todd Beamer Park is perhaps the most fitting, as he would have enjoyed seeing kids staying fit and having fun, according to his father, David Beamer, who addressed a crowd of about 200 people via speaker phone at the park's dedication.

Beamer attended California State University in 1987 and 1988. He aspired to be a walk-on baseball player there but didn't make the final cut, according to his father. Beamer transferred to Wheaton College in Illinois, where he played basketball and baseball.

"Let's roll!" was an expression Beamer used whenever he and his wife, Lisa, and their two young sons were leaving their home for a family outing. She was pregnant with their third child when Beamer died along with 43 others when Flight 93 crashed in a Pennsylvania field.

"The sights and sounds of kids running around a park having fun" is a fitting memorial to his son, David Beamer told the *Fresno Bee*, a newspaper in Central California. **RM**

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