

A rendering envisions the park's playground area
(photo courtesy of the City of Carlsbad).

A LEGACY TAKES SHAPE

Work is underway on
Veterans Memorial Park, a unique community
gathering space.

Written by Lois Swagerty

It's no coincidence that while America celebrated its 250th birthday, Carlsbad broke ground on what might be the most impactful project it has ever built—a park dedicated to recognizing and honoring the nation's veterans.

A BIG IDEA

Forward-thinking city planners in the 1980s paved the way by setting aside nearly 100 acres of open space near Faraday and Cannon Road. “After acquiring the large vacant property, the city designated it as a future citywide park through its 1986 Growth Management Plan,” explains Sarah Lemons, communications manager for the City of Carlsbad. “Three years later, the City Council named the future park Veterans Memorial Park [VMP] in recognition of veterans and military service.”

“The community has played a central role in shaping the park’s design,” Lemons says. “Since active planning began in 2019, more than 2,500 community members have helped influence the vision by sharing their ideas and priorities through online surveys, public workshops and other engagement opportunities.”

A BIG PLAN

Although the park’s construction involves countless moving parts, Carlsbad Parks Planning Manager Nick Stupin is excited about the progress so far. Stupin oversees all aspects of the park’s design—including the memorial plaza, bike park, playgrounds and trails.

Stupin also works on behalf of the plants, animals and insects who make this area their home. “Part of our mission is to remove invasive species that, if unchecked, can take over the natural habitat,” he says. “We will also encourage other sensitive plants and creatures to find a home here, such as the California Gnat Catcher, California Towhees and other birds.”

An extensive bike park will be located at the south end of the park. Stupin says, “The multigenerational park will include pump tracks for beginners, an intermediate flow trail for those who are still learning and more intense flow trails for advanced and expert users. I am looking forward to taking my whole family.”

Three nature-inspired playgrounds will grace the park, along with outdoor fitness stations and hiking trails. “A cool feature in the middle of the park will be a set of fitness stairs that resemble rocks and goes up the hillside to the public art area and gives you a good workout,” says Stupin. It’s a family-friendly area and dogs will be allowed on the public trails.

But Stupin is most excited about the Veterans Memorial Plaza at the north side of the park, featuring six glass panels recognizing each branch of military service. “To me, it’s a very impactful area that will provide a space for people to have quiet reflection, but also will be a great gathering place for the public,” he says. “Various veterans’ groups will be able to gather there and hold events for their members. At the heart of the plaza will be a 45-foot-tall flagpole, which will serve as a central focal point to represent national unity, shared community identity and civic pride.”

A BIG IMPACT

Construction started this summer and is expected to be completed in 2028. “Now that we have shovels to the ground, we’re building toward a great future,” says Stupin. “Every veteran is welcome at this park. We’re a region that’s heavily shaped by military service and we want veterans to know that VMP is their home. We hope that visitors to the park can learn about history and make a deeper connection with the folks who have ensured our freedom and understand the sacrifices they made.”



a) An aerial view of the park site. b) Carlsbad elected officials participated in the groundbreaking ceremony. Renderings of c) the bike park and d) the Veterans Memorial Plaza (photos courtesy of the City of Carlsbad).

PARK FEATURES

Veterans Memorial Plaza
Three playground areas
Public art installation
Panoramic views of coastline & lagoon
Picnic areas
Bike park

Community open lawn area
Outdoor fitness areas & climb
Outdoor community events space
Two parking lots
Electric vehicle charging stations
Trail network connections

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

The final meeting to submit community input to honor veterans within the park will be on Wednesday, Sept. 30, at 5 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.