The June 14 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the unique Oregon Hills Park launched a new era in Medford for public park design.

Located on the corner of McAndrews Road and Chablis in a densely populated area of east Medford, the 14.9-acre property is the City’s 12th neighborhood park and the fifth park developed since 2005. The brainchild of longtime City park planner Pete Young, Oregon Hills Park has a “natural” focus, both in design and features.

The amenities of the first of four planned development phases include unstructured natural play areas, fascinating interactive water features, climbing art structures for kids and creekside discovery areas.

The park features a 530-foot meandering Earth History Walk designed by retired Exxon/Mobil geologist Len Eisenberg. Dozens of colorful interpretive ceramic tiles are embedded in the walkway, complementing multiple rock formations relating to various geologic periods that straddle the path.

Another unique element is the handicap-accessible tree house overlooking the interior crown of a mature oak tree, highlighting the park’s many therapeutic recreational opportunities.

Children flock to a hand pump-fed “trickleway” into Lazy Creek that serves as interactive hydrologic entertainment as well as a large sand play area containing synthetic dinosaur bones -- an archeological treasure.

The $836,000 initial construction phase is also a model for sustainability in park design. Oregon Hills Park demonstrates how a native plant palette, proper soil preparation and modern drip-irrigation systems can produce attractive vegetation requiring minimal amounts of water.
Downtown Park Blocks Get Official Moniker

The pair of park blocks developed in The Commons project received an official overall name as a result of City Council action on June 6.

After being unceremoniously referred to as Park Block 1, Park Block 2 or The Commons park blocks during development, the Council approved “Pear Blossom Park” as the moniker for the downtown parks, which are located across Bartlett Street from the new Lithia Motors headquarters. The Council also assigned the name “Founder’s Square” to the south park block to honor the City’s founding citizens.

A subcommittee consisting of representatives from the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission, the School Board and the Southern Oregon Historical Society recommended the installation of plaques in Founder’s Square to commemorate individuals who played an important role in Medford’s history.

Summer Marked by Retirements and New Hires

The departure of a pair of three veteran employees triggered a flurry of staffing changes.

The department said goodbye to park technician Dennis Byrne after 29 years of service in June. Fifth-year parks supervisor James Dix departed in July, and building utility technician Russ Redfield retired in September after 18 employment anniversaries.

Byrne ranked No. 1 among all Parks and Recreation staffers in length of service and ninth among all City employees.

The retirements coupled with restructuring and the addition of a full-time position authorized through the budget process resulted in the hiring of park workers David Fulton and Matt Carvalho, and building utility technician Chris Reising.

Fulton, an active reservist in the National Guard who previously served as a seasonal employee for the Waste Reclamation District (WRD), was assigned to downtown zone parks and City Hall grounds.

Carvalho, an avid musician who came to the department from Western HydroCorp, oversees maintenance of the parking district lots and garages.

Reising, who spent 12 years at Metal Masters Inc., specializes in HVAC and energy management controls. He is the son of the City’s building department director.

On the recreation side, Andrea Torrey was hired as recreation supervisor in charge of youth programming and childcare services. The Bay Area native occupied a nearly identical role in San Anselmo, Calif. She also worked in the marketing field at her alma mater, UC Davis, where she competed on a national championship rowing team.

Staff Notes

- Versatile and detail-oriented Parks and Facilities Division administrative support technician Whitney Dennis was honored as the Department’s employee-of-the-quarter for the April-through-June timeframe.

- Resource development coordinator Quinnan Picton, recreation supervisor Sue McKenna and recreation superintendent Rich Rosenthal shared employee-of-the-quarter accolades for the third quarter.

- Recreation supervisor Jesse Nyberg and his wife, Molly, welcomed the arrival of their third child on June 29. Cooper Rey Nyberg tipped the scales at 8 pounds, 13 ounces and 21 inches. Meanwhile, parks supervisor Tim Stevens and his wife, Sanyell, became the proud parents of Lily Quinn Stevens on Aug. 12. She entered the world at 7 pounds, 4 ounces and 20 inches.
**RecFest Kicks Off Frenetic Summer Season**

The busiest summer slate ever coordinated by the Medford Parks and Recreation Department kicked off May 5 with the inaugural “RecFest” special event.

Approximately 500 flocked to Fichtner-Mainwaring Park for an afternoon chock-full of free recreational activities and amenities for all ages, including tennis, soccer, Ultimate Frisbee and sand volleyball clinics, tai chi and dog obedience demonstrations, jump houses, pinatas for kids, Police and Fire Department vehicle displays, 3-legged races and a SNAG golf tournament.

The event helped promote the arrival of the Department’s summer programs and services guide in Medford mailboxes, which contained over 150 classes, events, activities and services offered or coordinated by the City.

**‘Whimsical’ Murals Mounted on Community Center Buildings**

The City of Medford and the Medford Arts Commission unveiled the community’s newest public art installation on Sept. 20: two large outdoor murals adorning the Santo Community Center.

The event culminated a two-year, $28,000 process that resulted in the creation of two large murals, “Time Flies” and “Our View From Here” by muralist Jennifer Gillia Cutshall.

The 8-by-44-foot “Time Flies” mural adorns the exterior wall of the Youth Activity Center building facing McAndrews Road. The colorful, energetic, whimsical piece represents the youthful spirit nurtured by the wide range of recreational and enrichment activities and opportunities offered at Medford’s only community center. The mural depicts flying computer monitors, zany clocks and a child riding a bicycle under a starry sky.

Mounted along the breezeway adjacent to the community center main entrance facing Jackson Street, the 8-by-60-foot “Our View From Here” depicts numerous recognizable local landmarks, features and activities, and highlights the natural beauty of the Rogue Valley from a Medford perspective.

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**Parks & Recreation Quarterly Factoid**

7,130

The number of in-person or phone cash transactions processed by Medford Parks and Recreation customer service employees during the 2012 calendar year, which amounted to $658,832 in revenue.

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**Creating Healthy Lives, Happy People and a Strong Community**
Parks Division Orchestrates Pool Demolition, Ambitious Project List

Parks and Facilities Maintenance Division superintendent Greg McKown’s plate was heaping with projects this summer.

McKown and his staff responded in memorable fashion by coordinating several high-profile projects, including the Hawthorne Park pool demolition, Skate Park painting and repairs, Service Center electrical upgrades, a new sidewalk in Alba Park and multiple City Hall improvements.

The pool demolition grabbed headlines over the course of three weeks in July when Vitus Construction bulldozed the 63-year-old bathhouse and filled in the 278,000-gallon tank using pool deck concrete as structural fill. The $74,000 project came in 25 percent under the projected cost.

In August, interim parks supervisor Sue McKenna teamed up with Jack’s Board House owner Rita Allred on a volunteer project that resulted in repainting of the 2,000 square-foot Bear Creek Park skate park, in conjunction with a variety of facility repairs.

The big-ticket item of the summer was a two-month-long, $115,000 electrical upgrade to the

Liberty Park Construction Begins

The long-awaited groundbreaking for Liberty Park was gleefully executed by City officials and residents Sept. 23.

After years of conceptual discussion and planning, the event initiated the construction phase that will create a 100-by-150-foot park on the corner of Bartlett and Maple streets featuring a play structure, a stationary safari truck for small children, a rope merry-go-round, a pre-fabricated concrete restroom and a flat grassy area.

Vitus Construction was awarded a $118,450 design-build construction and landscaping contract, with a Dec. 31 estimated completion date.

USCCP Events Dazzle Thousands

Recreation Division staffers executed a series of silky smooth and successful summer events at U.S. Cellular Community Park.

In June, the annual “Beat of the Rogue” drum and bugle corps concert filled the stadium bleachers with 1,000 spectators. The following day on the same field, the Department played an integral role in staging the Medford Parks and Recreation Foundation’s “Parks Uncorked” fundraiser. The two events helped generate a record-setting $21,195 in youth scholarship funds.

In August, the week-long ASA U10/U12A Western National Tournament attracted 57 girls’ fastpitch teams from Washington, Oregon and California and produced an estimated $1 million in economic benefit to the community.