

# SLAM

SOUTHWICK LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL MEMO

southwick  
LA

Designing the Southwest

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## CREATING PLACE FOR PEOPLE

BY: ELIZABETH JONES

As I am writing this article it is 107 degrees outside and it is only May! Extreme weather conditions such as this can make providing usable outdoor spaces in Las Vegas a challenge. Comfortable spaces can be successfully designed by creating microclimates. Microclimates are distinctive climates within small-scale areas such as gardens, parks, or part of a city. Variables of microclimates include temperature, rainfall, wind and humidity. Changing these variables will create subtle differences from the conditions prevailing over the area.



Our goal as designers is to create thermally comfortable habitats for people as well as creating energy-efficient landscapes for buildings. This is accomplished

through site analysis. The questions we ask ourselves consist of: Who are the users? What time of day is the landscape used? What is the length of time per use? What time of year is the site used? After defining the use of the space we can consciously manage the variables of microclimates to the design.

The four elements that can be addressed through design are sun control, wind control, air temperature and plant palette. Design solutions for sun control include summer shading by using trees with large canopies and shade structures. Winter sun infiltration is created by using deciduous trees, allowing the sun to warm the space when it is cold. Reducing glare and ground temperature can be accomplished by using materials with a high albedo (light colors and low reflectance). Wind Control involves the manipulation of the movement of air. Designs should consider modifying the speed and direction of prevailing winds, blocking cold winds, capturing summer breezes, and controlling the wind. One design solution is creating wind breaks using plant material or walls. Air temperature & humidity can be affected by different design elements. By isolating an area we are able to create a comfortable environment. Design solutions include providing dense shade or adding a water element. Plant palettes will create dynamic moods and are also a design tool when creating microclimates. Enclosed spaces and shade trees will create a different microclimate than an open space or the natural desert landscape.

Next time you are outside you may notice why you enjoy one space over another.

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

This month our Employee Spotlight has landed on our resident surfer and newsletter co-editor Matt Durham. He thought he could get out of it by helping with the newsletter but we got him this month just for all of you.

Matt was born and raised in California and enjoyed every minute. He was introduced to Landscape Architecture in 8th grade at Career Day. With his love of design and the outdoors, he knew it was the perfect combination for him. Secretly he wanted to be the co-editor of the SLAM, he just didn't know it yet. In 2001, Matt moved to Las Vegas to earn his degree in Landscape Architecture. He graduated from UNLV in 2006. During his time at UNLV, he worked for the Desert Demonstration Gardens and the Springs Preserve. After that, he started working for Landscape Architecture firms and has ended up here, and we are glad he did.



In his free time he loves to fish. He goes at least once a week. As mentioned before, one of his passions is the outdoors. He loves offroading, wakeboarding and in case you haven't noticed he loves photography too. In his opinion its wasting a lot of perfectly good film. However, he has a lot of great pictures that make the newsletter.

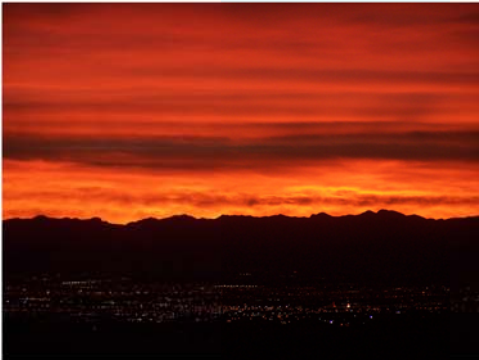
We are happy to have him here. Like all our employees, we enjoy the ideas and experiences he brings to our company.

## SOUTHWEST WATER RECLAMATION FACILITY

City of Henderson Water treatment Facility is located at St. Rose Parkway, south of Paseo Verde Parkway. From some views, it may look like a small mountain emerging from the landscape. It is actually 20' tall berms designed to screen the water treatment facility from the adjacent homes.

The landscape design was a collaboration between Tate Snyder Kimsey Architects, Southwick Landscape Architects and the Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

### PICTURE OF THE MONTH



SUNSET  
LAS VEGAS, NV  
TAKEN BY: MATT DURHAM

Imagination is more important than knowledge. -Albert Einstein

The interior landscape of the berm system is native revegetation, designed to look similar to the desert area that existed before the facility was built. The exterior landscape of the berm is designed to be somewhat geometric. As you can see in the picture, the exterior angled berm design includes different colors and sizes of decorative rock and alternating rows and grids of plant materials that differ for each angled berm section.



The west portion of the site includes a walking path with lights, shade trees and seating elements for neighborhood use. Other features of the site include gabion wall planters within the functional drainage way just west of the berms. There is also a trail along St. Rose Parkway which is part of the City of Henderson's trail system. It is a very unique landscape design. The project is still under construction, but coming along quickly.