

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

Palo Verde Branch Library and Maryvale Community Center

Phoenix

Gould Evans and Wendell Burnette Architects

Gould Evans and Wendell Burnette make urban and social connections at the Palo Verde Library and Maryvale Community Center in Phoenix

By Clifford A. Pearson

Just as balancing the mind and body can create a healthy person, integrating learning and physical activity can produce a successful community hub. Such was the thinking behind the Palo Verde Branch Library and Maryvale Community Center, which opened in January on the west side of Phoenix and represents an unusual collaboration between two city agencies, the library system and the parks and recreation department, and two local architectural firms—Gould Evans and Wendell Burnette Architects. While the Phoenix office of Gould Evans—headed by Jay Silverberg, AIA—and the architect Wendell Burnette, AIA, had both established reputations for inventive responses to the desert environment, the city agencies had pursued very different approaches to architecture in the past, with the library system hiring innovative Modernists such as Will Bruder and Richard + Bauer, and the parks department viewing building in a more utilitarian way. Like Leavittown on Long Island, New York, Maryvale started as a post–World War II suburb fueled by easy automobile access and low-interest G.I. loans. In Phoenix, developer John F. Long built not only affordable houses for returning veterans, but worked with California architect Victor Gruen to create a hospital, post office, shopping center, library, community center, swimming pool, and public park. But unlike its eastern cousin, Maryvale grew up to become a troubled community, as middle-class families moved farther out and crime moved in. Long, however, didn't give up on Maryvale. He pushed the city to reinvest in the struggling neighborhood and helped pass a bond issue to pay for the new branch library and community center to replace inadequate existing facilities.



Photo © Bill Timmerman

Gruen's master plan for Maryvale featured a park, around which stood the hospital, shopping center, library, pool, and community center. The architects lined up the new buildings on axis with the existing pool along the east side of the site and convinced the city to grant a variance reducing the number of parking spaces from 700 to 240. Lining up the new buildings on the east edge of the site facing 51st Avenue (a major north-south road) also gave the project a strong public presence, something the city had requested. But Silverberg and Burnette didn't want to create a wall of buildings separating the park to the west from the thoroughfare on the east, so they explored the issue of transparency in their architecture, eventually developing a design that rests a pair of metal-clad blocks on 8-foot-high bands of clear glass.

the People

Owner

City of Phoenix

Architect's firm name:

Gould Evans + Wendell Burnette Architects
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www.wendellburnettearchitects.com/

Principals in charge of Design:

Wendell Burnette AIA, Jay Silverberg AIA

Project Manager:

Ron Geren

Project Architect:

Patrick Magness

Design Team:

Jenell Bass, Shawn Croissant, Jennifer Little, Jose Pombo, Scott Roeder, Matthew Trzebiatowski

Interior designer:

Gould Evans + Wendell Burnette Architects

Engineer(s):

Structural:

Rudow + Berry

Mechanical & Plumbing:

Kunka Engineering

Electrical:

Associated Engineering

Civil:

WRG Design

Consultant(s)

Landscape:

Ten Eyck Landscape Architects
www.ten-eyck.com/

Lighting:

Horton, Lees and Brogden
www.hlblighting.com

Acoustical:

Wardin Cockriel Associates
www.wardincockriel.com

Graphic Design:
Thinking Caps
www.thinkingcaps.net

General contractor:
Smith Construction Management

Interior Millwork and Custom Casework:
ForeSite Construction

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Renderer:
CAD system, project management, or other software used:
AutoCad 2000/2006
www.autodesk.com