



# Amphitheater dropped from Great Park plan

By **SONYA SMITH IRVINE WORLD NEWS**

The Great Park board has approved a master plan without an amphitheater, but with a grand entrance at Trabuco Road as the hallmark of the park's first phase. Board members also have agreed on a strategy for selecting which proposals are included in the park.

The unanimous votes came last Thursday, 21 months after Ken Smith's team was hired to design the 1,347-acre park, the centerpiece of redevelopment at the shuttered El Toro air base. The project will also include homes, shops and universities built by the Lennar Corp.

"What I'm seeing now is more of a passive, open-space park," board member Christina Shea said. While board member Steven Choi agreed, her colleagues said the design is a step in creating a balance of active and passive uses.

## **MASTER PLAN**

The plan approval includes a wildlife corridor, cultural terrace, sports park and canyon. The plan was approved by the city's Planning Commission in August.

"This plan is bringing together a sense of nature, a sense of recreation and also a real sense of renewal," board member Michael Pinto said.

Shea and Choi questioned why staff members removed a 10,000-seat amphitheater and expanded sports park from the plan. Staff members said both were left out for now so the park can fit within environmental impact constraints. Choi and Shea approved the plan after staff members said features could be added.

## **FIRST PHASE**

The board also set the stage for the park's first phase, costing \$402.9 million.

After opening the orange balloon in July, the board may next expand the attraction while planning a wildlife corridor, uncover the natural Agua Chinon stream, grade and install utilities across the park and start building the grand Trabuco Road entry, as money is available.

Designers said only 20 percent of the sports area is in the first phase, with expectations that some group or groups will build the rest. Also, board member and retired Lt. Col. Bill Kogerman said the \$14.9 million planned for an aircraft museum "does not even touch what needs to be done" for honoring the site's history.

## **PUBLIC PROPOSALS**

Thursday's approvals also cemented a structure for evaluating, ranking and deciding in a few months which of the numerous public park proposals will be included in the plans. Designers expect to bring those proposals back to the board in a few months.

Proposals include a butterfly garden for the botanical gardens, a Bonsai tree museum, a Ballet Pacifica dance academy and numerous sports park proposals.

The proposals will now be evaluated on whether they advance the concept of a public place and civic engagement; advance the character of the Great Park; promote personal, regional and global health; ensure financial sustainability; and include a concept and implementation that are forward-looking.