

OC POST
IRVINE
 WORLD NEWS

THE GREAT VISION

Little has been built for the Great Park at the old air base
 PAGE 3

FREE

JUNE 12-13, 2008

CITY TO TAP RESERVES TO BALANCE BUDGET
 IRVINE 6

OUR FAMILY REVIEWERS LOVED 'KUNG FU PANDA'
 A+E 20

WEIRD NEWS 2
 IRVINE 5-12
 MONEY 18
 HEALTH 19
 A+E 20-21
 SPORTS 22-31

Online at:
www.ocpost.com

COUPON IN BOTTLE

\$4 OFF YOUR NEXT LUXURY CAR WASH

5582 AUTON PARK, IRVINE, CA 92618

FOR 7 DAYS 766-3981. Limit 4 per customer.

© 2008 AUTON PARK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

COMING SATURDAY: CHECK OUT OUR TWO ATHLETES OF THE YEAR

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| THE NEXT FEW DAYS | SATURDAY Coast: 76° Inland: 80° Sunny | SUNDAY Coast: 76° Inland: 78° Mostly Sunny | MONDAY Coast: 75° Inland: 78° Sunny | TUESDAY Coast: 76° Inland: 79° Mostly Sunny | WEDNESDAY Coast: 75° Inland: 77° Mostly Sunny |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|

TOP STORY

Publicity effort questioned

BY SEAN HEWITT
AND CARRIE O'NEIL
STAFF WRITERS

Great Park leaders have spent six years promoting visions of a majestic, 1,200-acre park, where military runways, hangars and chain-link fences give way to sports fields, natural landmarks and cultural gathering points. But in the same six years, the only attraction open to the public — an orange balloon ride — has closed down.

New attractions are around the corner, but Great Park leaders have focused on selling their vision of the park to the public and creating a detailed master plan, rather than moving forward with construction.

Through glossy brochures, public outreach and community events, more than \$4 million has gone into city Great Park Corp. and Great Park Design Studio public relations efforts so far, according to city records and interviews with park officials, with proposed spending expected to add about \$2 million more.

A recent Orange County Registrar investigation found that most of the \$2.2 million spent by the nonprofit Great Park Conservancy has gone toward publicity. The conservancy, which is not in charge of planning or running the park, has raised \$2.8 million since 2000.

Councilman Larry Agran, chairman of the Great Park board of directors, defended the public relations spending. With the park having spent \$64 million as of Feb. 10 — and \$102 million proposed for 2008-09 — public relations remains a small piece of the Great Park's finances, Agran said.

"Given that this park will build out on the order of \$1.1



"It's one thing to do outreach, but we have done that over and over. We need to build a park."
Councilwoman Christa Shea, a member of the park's board.

billion, is it unreasonable to spend \$1 million a year to inform the public?" Agran asked. "If we're going to tell an accurate story of what is happening, we have a duty to invest in public information."

But critics question why so much effort is going into promoting a park that doesn't yet exist.

"It's one thing to do outreach, but we have done that over and over," said Councilwoman Christa Shea, a member of the park's board. "We need to build a park."

Park leaders hope the project will turn a corner in July, when the first portion of a 27-acre pavilion park is scheduled to open. In August and September, Agran said, the park is expected to host dances every Friday night and performances every Saturday night.

The Great Park on July 12 will see the return of the balloon ride, grounded in February after allegations of

safety violations.

"This area is going to come alive," Agran said of the pavilion park opening.

"People will see that not only is design under way, but in fact we're actual creation." Shea said, pointing to the existing crane, which once had a red, developer box. "Does it mean the park won't happen? No, it doesn't. It means we have to be more fiscally responsible."



One of the abandoned buildings near the Great Park balloon site.



The Great Park balloon, on the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station. (IRWIN CHAMBERLAIN)

MORE ON PAGE B: Great Park Design Studio official reacts to press coverage.

Design Studio spending

How low the Design Studio drilled up its \$4.2 million public outreach budget between January 2007 and February 2008.



The record

Since January 2007, Borde and Molrick planned to deliver 200 to 300 presentations, according to public records. But despite requested records requests, officials could not provide a complete list of the firm's work. Under Borde and Molrick's contract with the Design Studio, \$300,000 has been allocated for presentations. Invoices indicate that as of February, the firm had spent \$260,771 — or about 80 percent — of the total presentations contract.

Unlike other subcontractors, whose spending is kept in check by the project management and construction firm Borde Land Lease, Borde and Molrick reports to Great Park Corp. spokeswoman Marsha Dargatzis.

"This is not a typical way of managing a construction budget," said Dargatzis, adding in an e-mail that she is troubled with reviewing the public relations contract because she "is most familiar with the work." The assessment is left to her judgment and Borde and Molrick's internal bookkeeping.

Three public relations teams promote the park

BY SHARRENEEY
SNAPE WRETER

Outreach has long been central to the Great Park campaign.

Leading the way has been Newport Beach-based Perle and Melnick, which received nearly \$600,000 contracts from 1999 to 2005 to provide public relations and strategic planning services as local leaders across the 21 Toro property, work with Lennar Corp. to get the Great Park land, and choose the park's designers.

The Great Park Corp., which oversees the creation of the park, has its own in-house public-relations staff which focuses on public events, such as the preview park opening, and projects such as documenting the historical transition from air

base to the Great Park.

The corporation public relations team spent \$1.4 million from 2005 to 2007, according to budget documents. The corporation expects to spend about \$340,000 on public relations during the current fiscal year, and is proposing nearly \$1.7 million public relations spending during the fiscal year starting in July.

The Great Park Design Studio, hired by the corporation to create a master plan for the park, has its own public relations staff and a \$27.3 million agreement with the corporation that began in January 2007. It includes a \$1.4 million contract with Perle and Melnick. The firm focuses on community presentations, readers and media relations.

Article ignores facts, says Great Park spokesman

The following letter to the editor was submitted by Steve Adams, public information officer for the Great Park Design Studio.

Your recent article criticizing the pace of Great Park development and the cost of public outreach activities ignores some important facts.

The Design Studio was hired and began planning the Great Park little more than three years ago, not six as was suggested by the article. Within that time, we have completed an award-winning Master Plan for the Park and are within a few months of completing schematic design, which includes extensive engineering, landscape architecture and ar-

chitecture.

Public involvement in the planning process has been given a high priority by our client, the Orange County Great Park Corporation. We have been working on a daily basis with coalition representatives from the arts, environmental, food and agriculture groups, multicultural interests, sports, equestrians and veterans. More than 300 organizations are part of these coalitions, representing thousands of people. We are taking input from these coalitions to design central features of the Park, including the aircraft museum, cultural terraces, wildlife corridor and sports park.

In addition, we have undertaken a government rela-

tions effort designed to obtain millions of dollars in available county state and federal funds for Great Park projects and programs. Last week, U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer visited the Great Park and pledged her support for these efforts.

Our Frontier Park, which includes the very popular Great Park Balloon, is now under construction and will be open to the public on July 12. Construction of the next phase of the Park is expected to begin later this year.

Planning a project of this size and including the needs of people in that planning process requires time, money and patience. The result will be a park that truly deserves the name "Great."

TUSTIN RANCH GOLF CLUB PRESENTS:

Music Under The Stars



The World's Greatest
ROLLING STONES
Live Concert Re-Creation
JUMPING JACK FLASH



Thursday, June 19th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Jumping Jack Flash,
an incredible Rolling Stones tribute band,
performing at the Greenside Patio.
Cocktails and a limited dinner menu
will also be available.
Admission is free and no RSVP is required.

TUSTIN RANCH GOLF CLUB
Public play... private feel.
13442 Tustin Ranch Road • Tustin, CA 92782
www.tustinranchgolf.com
888/767-3129