

# Carmelitos Community Garden

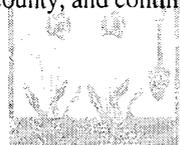
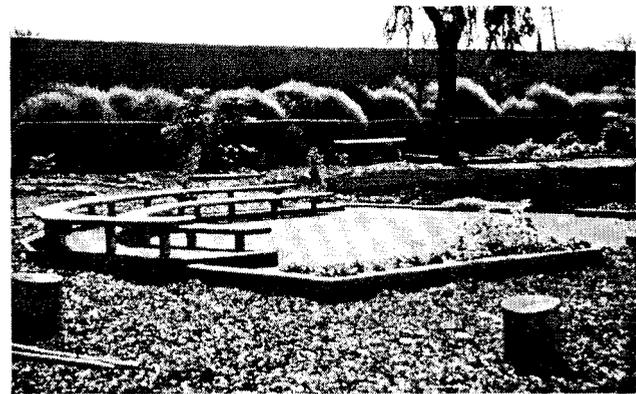
*1998 ACSA Collaborative Practice Award*

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The School of Architecture at the University of Southern California has been collaborating with the Common Garden Program for four years to help improve vacant lots in the vicinity of the university. Professor Benzinberg Stein suggested enlarging such efforts by locating a demonstration garden in a public housing complex, coupling an architecture class with a community-training program. The executive director of the Community Development Commission of the Los Angeles County Housing Authority located a site at Carmelitos in Long Beach, California. The housing project covers 36 acres, of which 6 acres of the vacant informal dumping grounds were designated as the site for the future garden.

The architecture studio classes, through informal meetings with the residents, organized a program for the site, obtained approval for the Housing Authority and prepared a design solution. A small group of students continued the work preparing a cost estimate, contacting vendors to assemble materials, and drawing necessary construction details to make the prefabricated green house a reality. The executive director, together with the entire staff, reevaluated the program and allocated both resources and personnel to help speed up the entire design and construction process.

The project was constructed with the help of 40 residents and students over a twelve-month period. Two years ago, the first group of 15 volunteers started the training class, which is now an on-going operation. The second stage of the project was finished six months ago with the construction of the rose garden adjacent to the senior citizen housing. The last stage is partly operating and is due to be completed in the summer. It includes construction of the nursery that will supply edibles grown on site for sale, provide plant materials to all public housing sites in the county, and continue employing many of the residents.



CARMELITOS  
COMMUNITY  
GARDEN

THE GROWING EXPERIENCE

