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**WHAT IT COULD LOOK LIKE:** This is designer Richard Fisher's vision for an interactive water feature that could be coming to Courtney's Sand Castle, an accessible playground, later this year in the Marblehead Coastal community.

COURTESY CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE

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## Kids' playground to feature access for all

Dragons, a topiary garden and a castle will be accessible to all kids who visit Courtney's Sand Castle, including those who use wheelchairs.

By **FRED SWEGLES**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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**SAN CLEMENTE** – As plans for Courtney's Sand Castle near completion, it looks like children in wheelchairs and kids with fast feet will be equally enchanted by a Disney-esque feature that's being designed into the all-access playground.

Richard Fisher unveiled the creation to San Clemente city officials last week – a simulated rock mountain with water that will seep out of fissures, drip down the mountain and cascade in waterfalls.

"As the children walk through this or go through this area in a wheelchair," Fisher said, "there will be sensors in the pavement that will turn on various water activities.

There will be a slow rise of water from some jets that come out of the ground in a few places. There will be water that starts trickling down and dripping."

The project includes a fun image of a dragon.

"As they walk past that," Fisher said, "the sensor will activate a very fine mist of water that will kind of spray out at the kids. Portions of this will have dragon bones in the rocks that look like the remnants of dragons. And of course, with the castle next to it, the whole idea is this all works together as part of the castle concept."

Courtney's Sand Castle is planned to be a universally accessible playground that city officials believe will become an attraction to San Clemente and to the Marblehead Coastal community, where it will be part of an 8½-acre sports park.

The playground is named for Courtney Faye Smith, a local girl with spinal muscular atrophy, since it was her dream to have a playground where she and her friend Spencer Shelton could play side by side – she in a wheelchair, he not.

Fisher said he is working with Rock & Waterscape International, an Irvine firm, on the public park that he says "will be absolutely a unique thing." The builder will craft it from a detailed model.

SunCal, developer of the 313 Marblehead Coastal homes, will build the sports park for the city and will contribute \$600,000 toward Courtney's Sand Castle through a community facilities district.

Fisher said there appears to be a \$600,000 to \$800,000 shortfall. Officials earlier had pegged the cost of the project at around \$1 million.

**SOME OF THE FEATURES**

- A castle-like playground structure, surrounded by a simulated moat.
- A ship-like playground structure, surrounded by a simulated sea.
- A sensory garden, with plants that produce aromas when kids pinch the leaves.
- Topiary plants, sheered into the shape of animals.
- A set of four swings, with wheelchair accessibility.
- The sensor-driven water feature.

**Contact the writer:** To learn about fund-raising efforts, call the San Clemente Beaches, Parks and Recreation Foundation at 949-276-8866. 949-492-5127 or [fswegles@ocregister.com](mailto:fswegles@ocregister.com)

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