

# Neapolitan

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Friday, June 5, 2015



The Parque Celestial features an interactive labyrinth.

## PRIVATE GARDENS



The Parque Celestial, featuring an array of astrological references, was awarded the American Society of Landscape Architects' Florida Chapter Award of Excellence in 2003. Visitors to Parque Celestial experience the effect of time by observations of light and shadow, stars and planets, and seasonal changes in the landscape.

### ■ Mediterra created 3 parks for residents' enjoyment

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Inside the Mediterra residential community lay a trio of hidden gems unavailable for public viewing — at least in person. Though private in nature, Mediterra's three award-winning parks represent the envy of the architectural-landscaping world for their beauty, utility and deeply philosophical construction.

"The parks offer residents a quiet place for meditation, hiking and taking the dog for a walk," said Greg Tick, general manager of Mediterra's homeowners' asso-

ciation for the past 15 years. "The most popular feature we have here is a walking path that circumnavigates the community, and the path goes by all three parks, so people can stop by and visit them while on their walks."

In addition to the 2-acre Parterre Gardens — which "interjects a revolving palette of annual blooms into the clipped symmetry of low holly hedges, a stately reflecting pool, meandering walkways and benches" — Mediterra also boasts the 3-acre Parque Celestial and Calusa Play Park, both of which were largely designed by Naples-based land-

scape architect Ellin Goetz, who in 2003 won the American Society of Landscape Architects' Florida Chapter Award of Excellence for her design work on The Parque Celestial.

Goetz, president of the Goetz & Stropes architectural-landscaping firm that played a critical role in revitalizing Fifth Avenue South in the 1990s and 2000s, said both parks contain features that might not prove immediately apparent to the eye.

For example, Goetz said, Parque Celestial, which was designed in

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2001, seeks to more fully engage visitors with their environment and to make them more aware of the effect planets and constellations had on the lives of ancient cultures through a variety of features that include a sun clock in the center.

"The people of ancient cultures didn't have electricity, so natural light had much more influence on their lives than it does now," explained Goetz, a Staten Island native who graduated from both Vassar College and The University of Massachusetts. "The (summer) solstice, for one, was highly celebrated because the people knew the sun would be out

the longest the next day, and that was important to every aspect of their lives."

Goetz said the sun clock is an interactive device where a person's shadow determines the time of day through two different sets of markers, accounting for both daylight saving time and Eastern Standard Time. By standing at month markers, a shadow will fall across a circle of shells on the platform to determine the time.

"We also graded the site so as to change the elevation toward the back of the property," Goetz said. "To the north are the conservation lands of Mediterra, so to me that meant there would never be any lights there, so we built a stargazing pavilion on the overlook with an open metalwork ceiling featur-



The reflection pool at the Parterre Gardens at Mediterra.

ing shapes of stars. The idea was that people could bring their telescopes at night to look at the stars."

For meditation purposes, Goetz also incorporat-

ed a labyrinth into Parque Celestial.

"It's a circular pathway you walk on as you move toward the center," she said. "Unlike a maze, with

tall hedges that are designed to trick your mind, the labyrinth is flat so users can center their minds and meditate while taking the path in and out."

Goetz said the inspiration for Mediterra's Calusa Play Park came from a fascination with the culture of the Calusa Indians.

"Part of the park site is on an archaeological-protected area, so I thought we could incorporate that history into the design," she said.

To accomplish that, Goetz paid homage to the Calusa Indians' seafaring roots with shell mounds that contain shark teeth and other fossils for digging fun and grassy hills for children to run up and down.

"I also found a company in Orlando that fabricates gigantic alligators, so we also set one of those in the shells for kids to climb on," she said.

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