

The Height of Alternative Elegance

Newport Coast Capital redefines the modern aesthetic in Palm Springs, Calif.

By Lisa Brown

Imagine sipping cocktails from a home bar larger than your kitchen, with an expanse of hills silhouetted against a pristine skyline just outside your clerestory windows. You might think such a scene is reserved for the James Bond reveries of Hollywood.

But you would be wrong. It is, in fact, the reality of a revolutionary project in Palm Springs, Calif. Welcome to ALTA.

An alternative edge

“Our community speaks to ‘alternatives’ in many ways. In fact, the name ALTA is a derivative of ‘alternatives’ and ‘reaching new heights,’” says Kim Bauer, vice president of marketing for Newport Coast Capital.

Buyers at ALTA are fiercely independent — leaders in their careers, communities and thinking. They maintain a luxury lifestyle, traveling frequently and enjoying the finer things wherever they are. For them, outstanding architecture is seen as a mark of individuality and self-expression. It is not only appreciated, it is a requirement.

“We are a developer first and foremost,” explains Bauer. “We take our commitment to providing significant returns to our investors very seriously. Ultimately, I think that in everything we do the buyer/investor is the center of our focus, and we must constantly scrutinize and change our strategies to come out ahead. From intense research and development to quality of construction to excellence in customer service, our approach is to exceed the expectations of our customers.”

And with four Gold Nugget Awards under its belt, it's safe to say that ALTA does just that. In addition to Merit Awards for Detached Residential Project of the Year and Best Single-Family Detached Home — 4,001 to 4,500 square feet, and a Grand Award for Best Single-Family Detached Home — 3,601 to 4,000 square feet, ALTA also received the singular honor of being named the Gold Nugget 2006 Home of the Year.

Design redefined

Stunning architecture is no stranger to the chic landscape of Palm Springs, but ALTA somehow manages to astonish — even in a city that has seemingly seen it all.

Notes Bauer, “ALTA is all about award-winning architecture, amazing expanses of glass, indoor/outdoor living and views that compare to a deeply religious experience — no matter what your religion.”

While butterfly rooflines and bold geometric statements may be apropos for mid-modern Palm Springs, Newport Coast Capital has clearly raised the bar.

“An inverted roof over the great room is augmented by large expanses of retractable glass, making the most

◀ A “floating” dining peninsula juts out over this pool from ALTA Plan A. Designed for socializing, the outdoor pavilion provides the perfect locale to relax and enjoy the mountain views.



▲ The bold lines and geometric formations of ALTA Plan B's living room astutely complement the arid landscape in which the project is nestled like an artful oasis.



▼ The stark lines of ALTA Plan B's master bath are elegantly accented by the tub and faucetry's curvature. ▲ A night view of ALTA Plan C's remarkable front facade.



of the amazing mountain views," Bauer says. "Built for socializing, the indoor living area spills onto the outdoor pavilion, complete with a 'floating' dining peninsula that juts out over the pool. Its interplay of stone cladding and smooth, finished volumes punctuated by deep openings is a work of art."

Taking versatility to extremes

Each "base floor plan" at ALTA is three bedrooms and three-and-one-half baths. However, through a series of approximately 30 clever structural additions — including a guesthouse, extra garage spaces, a gym, a media room or home office, a butler's pantry, a pool cabana, water features and more — that have been pre-designed, engineered and approved by the City, the plans can be easily expanded to six bedrooms and four garage spaces.

"With this program, we can offer our homebuyers a custom home experience without the custom home headache, saving them substantial time and energy," Bauer says.

Reaping the benefits of research

"I could write a book about learning curves," Bauer says. "This project required that everyone working on the assignment step way outside his or her 'comfort zone' and approach things in an entirely new and different way. Not everyone was up for that challenge so we were constantly looking for folks who hold themselves to very high standards and thrive on a little bit of risk. Maintaining a strong, unfaltering vision for the outcome of the project was the glue that held it all together and became a career challenge in itself. And in the end, not compromising is one of the things of which we are most proud."



▲ A close look at ALTA Plan C's exterior detailing. The mix of textures gives the home numerous focal points.

► The dining area of ALTA Plan C makes excellent use of the surrounding Palm Springs landscape. Sleek, compelling design mimicks the desert's natural simplicity.



▼ Highly stylized architecture and a modern aesthetic permeates every room, including Plan C's home office.



Newport Coast Capital conducted numerous focus groups and an incredible amount of research to determine what ALTA's target audience wanted in a home and what they weren't getting from other developments. While some of their concepts were spot on, other aspects of the preliminary business model had to be modified. This was accomplished by taking the discoveries of Newport Coast Capital's research and designing them directly into ALTA.

"In the process of bringing the project to life, the biggest learning curve was realizing how flexible we still had to be even though we had solid market data," Bauer says.

Newport Coast Capital continues to gather new data from prospective buyers and use that information in its operations. "We recently discovered that the biggest negative perception about ALTA was our lot size," explains Bauer. "The lots in our original business plan were one-third of an acre, but customers told us that they wanted more land. We were quickly able to change course and have designated a significant portion of our community to estate-size lots up to an acre or even more. What was a weakness has quickly become a strength!"

Strategic success

"The future is really bright for us," notes Bauer. "In a time where everyone is worried about interest rates and softening markets, we're at the right size and in the right place to capture some incredible opportunities."

With significant projects already in the works, the key to Newport Coast Capital's success lies in a commitment to diversification.

"We won't take on any project if we cannot create a product that is highly differentiated," explains Bauer. "It protects us in market downturns and helps us command better returns in good markets. With this commitment, we stay personally challenged and rewarded. In addition, we focus on improving communities and providing great returns for our investors and buyers."

A modern Renaissance

In an age where even post-modernism is passé, Newport Coast Capital brings a futuristic vision to the stage not unlike a tall glass of ice water to slake a desert thirst.

"Our world is changing on a daily basis," says Bauer. "Things get redefined, recreated and reborn all the time. What we knew as home, work and community yesterday is different today. And life is as exciting as you make it! If you are going to be spending a significant amount of time devoted to work, it might as well be something you are totally passionate about. That passion shows in the results."



Lisa Brown is an editor of *Builder* and *Developer* magazine. She may be reached via e-mail at lbrown@penpubinc.com.