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Home developers set their sights high

By Janice Kleinschmidt
Editor

Palm Springs Mayor Ron Oden stood under a tent along South Palm Canyon Drive on Jan. 4 and noted that someone told him, "You should be proud this happened under your reign." The mayor looked beyond the shelter, held up his right hand toward the drizzling sky and said, "And I am."

More seriously, Oden said, "This project is ... extremely important to the city of Palm Springs."

The proud event and object of the mayor's affection is Alta, a gated enclave of luxury homes being built on 30 acres between Bogert Trail and Acanto Drive in the southwest corner of the city. The lowest base price for 67 semi-custom homes in the development will be about \$1.5 million though the amount buyers end up paying after exercising options and upgrades will realistically be more.

In any event, Alta is not likely to attract buyers concerned with the bottom line. High-end real estate developer Newport Coast Capital Management has spared no expense in lining up the dream team of architects, engineers and designers — and even toasted its introduction with Schramsberg champagne.

"Alta was conceived as a celebration of great modern architecture by great modern architects," said Frank Eder, president of the Newport Beach-based development firm. A sign on the lectern from which he spoke read, "Palm Springs Modern. Reborn."

Streets at Alta will bear the names of iconic architects: Cody Court, Neutra Street, Lautner Lane, Wexler Way, and Patel Place. The two living honorees, Donald Wexler and Narendra Patel, were on hand for the Jan. 4 event.



Alta homes, designed by Narendra Patel, will offer sophisticated architecture, quality construction and high-end finishes.

Wexler related his experience working for William Cody and Richard Neutra. Patel, the architect contracted to design Alta, related his experience apprenticing with Wexler.

"He taught me strong architectural discipline," Patel noted. "He said, 'There is no real architecture unless you have the whole idea. ... That really stuck in my mind in a great way.'" Patel added that what he learned from Wexler was "clean, pure architecture."

"I am honored to be part of the brilliant team that has been put together," said Patel, a seven-time Gold Nugget Award winner. The team includes interior design-

er Jeffrey Jurasky, landscape architect Tom Doczi, and the Mainiero, Smith & Associates engineering firm. Other partners in the project include ING Realty Partners and Devcon Construction.

Alta is Newport Coast Capital's second Coachella Valley project; it previously developed Westgate at Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage for custom homes.

Patel said he was contracted for the Alta project just before he went on vacation in Mexico and, when informed of the rapidly approaching deadline, packed sketching materials while forgetting his swimsuit. The design concept, he said, was conceived on a Cancun beach.

Patel, whose own architectural offices in Rancho Mirage employ innovative methods for energy efficiency, said the Alta homes are designed "to facilitate a healthy environment for uplifting spaces filled with natural light." Each of three base models has an alternate design, so there are actually six floor plans, plus buyers can add or deduct options. "I design in such a way that every home is going to look different," Patel said. "They will be consistent, but different, because people will choose different options." The environmentally oriented architect also is individualizing each home site to maximize views of the nearby mountains.

Alta is Patel and Jurasky's first "production home" project; the architect and designer typically work with individuals in custom estates. Jurasky and the head designer in his firm, David Pitzer, will develop interior building standards, designer upgrades and custom upgrades.

"We're doing three models, then setting up and designing the design center and operating it for all the homeowners through the whole project, until the last home is built," Jurasky said.

Alta homes, which are on fee land, will range from 2,700 to 4,700 square feet on lots ranging from 13,500 square feet to 23,075 square feet. They include a minimum of three bedrooms, 3.5 baths, and a two-car garage with options for as many as six bedrooms, 6.5 baths and a five-car garage. Other options include attached or detached guest casitas, sliding doors that blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, solar-energy packages and "smart" building materials. All homes feature expansive covered outdoor living areas, gourmet chef's kitchens, clerestory windows, and spa bathrooms.

After grading and sewer installation, Eder said, construction on model homes could begin in February, with completion in about four months, though sales have already begun. "Total build-out will depend on how quickly homes sell," he said. "We anticipate being sold out within six months and final build-out one year after that." He said Newport Coast Capital is looking for more land in Palm Springs. "We think [the city] will be pretty resilient compared to other valley cities," he said.

Those words were music to the Oden's ears. Noting that new construction has been lacking in the city for many years, the mayor said that "in terms of attracting the type of retail citizens want downtown, we need new housing structures."



Newport Coast Capital president Frank Eder watched architects Donald Wexler and Narendra Patel sign Alta's first lot marker at the project's Jan. 4 celebration.