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▶ ROBERT HIDEY ARCHITECTS IN PLAYA VISTA

PLAYA VISTA WAS A forgotten wetland when Howard Hughes re-discovered it and constructed the Spruce Goose there in the 1940s. As the epicenter of Silicon Beach, the community's visionary sensibilities continue today, and developers struggle to keep up with demand for diverse housing choices in one of the Westside's hottest neighborhoods. Architect Robert Hidey, an acclaimed Southern California traditionalist, shows off his long-hidden modernist tendencies in Playa Vista.

Hidey is best known for lavish Spanish Colonial Revival

and Italianate homes from Newport Beach to Dubai; in Playa Vista, Hidey applies an unexpectedly deft hand to higher-density modern residences.

As a freshly minted architect out of Cal Poly Pomona, Hidey worked for William Pereira—best known for San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid—before finding a niche in luxury home design in the early 1990s. "Nobody at Pereira's office was thinking about the rich cultural history of Southern California," says Hidey, whose influences have included modernists such

← Loft in Playa Vista's Marlowe development

as Cesar Pelli and Richard Neutra.

"Today there's so much interest in contemporary architecture that I'm back to doing what I did when I got out of school," says Hidey, whose grand residential architecture is in the spirit of classically inspired Wallace Neff and Lillian Rice.

For his modernist work, he continues to be inspired by Neutra, whose influence can be seen in his Playa Vista work. He also admires the Indian firm DADA. "The way they mix materials is very intriguing to me, as well as their contrasts of glass and opaque surfaces," Hidey says of the suburban Delhi firm. He believes its simple forms and open designs make sense for the Southern California environment.

In Playa Vista, Hidey addresses a demographic more interested in a contemporary approach to the L.A. lifestyle than in Tuscan villas and cites the city's strong tradition of modernism as a foundation for that demand.

Progressive young consumers appreciate Hidey's signature resort style, even when it's incorporated into a relatively small lot. "I always

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try to connect the interior with the outdoors, and it's actually easier to do that in a modern aesthetic than in traditional architecture constrained by the discipline and rigors of wall mass," Hidey says.

According to the architect, structural advancements allow for larger openings and greater spans of glass, making the indoor-outdoor connection easier; he believes the resort lifestyle translates seamlessly to higher density developments. "Density creates a new set of challenges, which is the justification for bringing outdoor living to the roof, where privacy is protected and it's out of the shadows," says Hidey.

His first Playa Vista effort, a project for KB Home called Asher, resulted in three dozen houses with a strong modernist theme. The three-story structures are oriented on their small parcels—jogged in the middle—to capture more light and protect privacy; the homes provide as much usable outdoor space as possible, given the density.


In his next two projects for Brookfield Residential, Hidey expanded the outdoor living space by introducing versatile rooftop decks. "In all of these projects, we paid a great deal of attention to the orientation


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of the homes and thoroughly evaluated how they were impacted by the residences next door,” says Hidey, noting that this kind of density demands that no single home be designed in a vacuum.

Marlowe is a development of 30 three-story single-family detached homes with open-concept floor plans; city views are enjoyed through wider expanses of glass and ample outdoor decking adjoining the master suites and on rooftops. These residences, ranging from 3,123 to 3,341 square feet, are showy but functional; a fifth bedroom can be switched out for a much in-demand creative office.

Jewel, scheduled to debut in Playa Vista later this year, will exhibit the same brand of modernism, wide-open floor plans and expansive rooftop spaces as Marlowe, but with more square footage, higher ceilings and upgraded finishes.

Fourteen of these units will be built, and their prices—ascending to the mid-\$3,000,000s—will make many Angelenos regret not investing in these former wetlands when they had the chance.

—Roger Grody

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