

Imagine, Innovate, Implement: the Architect's Role in Realizing a Developer's Vision

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These days it seems that change is not only constant in the hospitality industry but happening at such a rapid rate that by the time we design and construct a new hotel we are immediately reconsidering the program, implementing new technology, or reacting to new schools of thought.

While what worked yesterday may still work today, chances are that we will figure out a way to improve upon it tomorrow. For some people, rapid change may be a dizzying phenomenon.

However, for architects, adapting to change, creating new solutions, and implementing them have always been central to our role within the hospitality industry.

Moreover, the ability to recognize new trends and innovate around them allows for those in our profession to partner with visionary developers to deliver exciting and inspiring guest experiences.

The cliché of the architect doodling on a napkin in blue ink is in fact, not often too far from the truth. What is missing from that familiar notion is that the ideas don't usually just flow from pen to paper (or napkin) but are rather sparked from the intimate developer/architect partnership. Together, we meet on the visionary plane, building upon a dialogue of ideas and balancing the realities of location, demographics, feasibility, and myriad opportunities and constraints.

While the scope of each project varies, the results are always best realized when the design process is founded upon the developer's crystal-clear vision of what the guest experience should achieve. Whether a luxury boutique spa, select-service lodge, high-rise downtown hotel, or surf-anchored resort – the unique vision establishes the baseline for the architect to imagine and communicate the possibilities.

Great designs are often the result of an architect's ability to examine and recognize relevant trends and interpret and execute them appropriately based upon the established development vision. The key is to respond with design ideas and solutions that support the long-term trend, without being *trendy*. In recent years we have identified several growing trends with staying power. They are already changing the way that architects design and travelers interact within the hospitality space, and savvy developers would be wise to take notice as they continue to revolutionize the future of the guest experience.



DSRT Surf, designed for Desert Wave Ventures, brings the perfect wave to the California desert with barefoot luxury design and amenities that deliver a complete resort experience.

Deliver the Unexpected

Today's thrill-seeking, social-media-driven culture has guests pursuing surprising experiences that go far beyond the familiar. While this trend has manifested various unexpected design responses and experiences, the emergence of a new class of activity-focused resorts in the California desert is delivering a juxtaposition to create such an irony there's a lore to it.

The tropical and remote South Pacific is known for its crystal-clear waters, exotic architecture, and luxurious villas. Leaping towards the unexpected, visionary developers are now looking to deliver a similar tropical getaway experience located in Palm Desert just two hours from the hustle and bustle of Los Angeles. Organized around a central, naturally shaped 20-acre lagoon, the main attraction at Lagoon Villas envisions guests arriving at a grand lobby then being whisked away to travel by water taxi across the lagoon to a private dock and one of the resort's unique 112 villas.

Each villa is equipped with a private deck that features a *spool* (blending of a pool and spa), a cantilevered hammock over the water, and luxurious chaise lounge chairs. The contemporary villas boast open floor plans with expansive lagoon villas. Bathrooms include oversized tubs and outdoor showers within a private garden, open-beamed ceilings, and sloping roofs fashioned with

solar panels. Moreover, VIP villas are located at the end of lagoon peninsulas, offering reflection ponds and glass bridges that allow visitors to peer directly into the water below the villa floor. These exclusive retreats will feature large decks and floating pavilions with daybed swings hung from a trellis adjacent to the waterline.

Taking the trend of delivering the unexpected to the next level, a group of surf enthusiasts and professionals have come together to build DSRT Surf, a surf-anchored resort in Palm Desert, located more than 100 miles from the California coast, where visitors can catch the perfect wave every time in temperature-controlled waters. The new resort will feature a five-acre surf lagoon that utilizes Wavegarden Cove technology to accommodate more than 70 surfers at once. The proprietary technology splits the lagoon into two halves so multiple wave types can be ridden by professional or beginner surfers.

The lagoon is ringed by a boardwalk and beach facilities, as well as a luxury boutique hotel, surf center, and residences. Whether sitting on the hotel pool deck with a cocktail, overlooking the surfing action, or sitting in the living room of your lagoon-side villa with the back doors open and surfers passing by, this is anticipated to be the most unique neighborhood in the desert. The entire complex is ringed by the Desert Willow Golf course and the beautiful Mountain Vistas beyond, creating a one-of-a-kind surfing experience. The architecture combines the natural materials and indoor/outdoor lifestyle of the desert with the casual barefoot vibe of the surf community, to create the signature "Baja Cool" resort environment.

What also sets DSRT Surf apart from other surf park experiences is the understated luxury resort that is designed with amenities such as a spa and fitness center, lagoon-front dining and bar, private dining and event rooms, and expansive indoor/outdoor patio and balcony space overlooking the beach and surfing activity. The resort embraces the surf aesthetic of natural materials, barefoot luxury, and a hang-loose vibe.



The design of the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, a four-star Autograph Collection Hotel elevates and preserves the history of the adjacent Mission.

Commit to Authentically Local

At the opposite spectrum of the decidedly unexpected is the allure of the authentically local guest experience. These resorts successfully leverage the unique identity of the location to create a special and one-of-a-kind experience defined by the local community and culture. When designed and executed to its fullest vision, truly authentic hospitality developments evoke a deep and often meaningful experience that connects visitors and residents alike to the destination.

One such exemplary hospitality destination resort that embraces its authentically local heritage is the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, located in the picturesque town of the same name in Orange County, California. The Inn overlooks the historic 240-year-old Mission San Juan Capistrano and represents the cultural destination through carefully curated architecture, timeless design, and storytelling. Fully embracing its context and community, this four-star Autograph Collection Hotel delivers understated elegance while showcasing the history of the land and the significance of the adjacent Mission.

The key design and planning concepts behind the hotel were aimed at elevating and preserving the unique history and sense of place - a magic that can only be appreciated through experience. The design team first visited the project site in 2015 and were immediately inspired by the vista

overlooking the Mission and ruins of the Great Stone Church. They set about planning a hotel that would feel like a natural extension of the Mission experience, expressing the spirituality and reverence for the land.

The resulting architecture is expressed through California Mission and Monterey styles. Inspired by San Juan Capistrano's charming patchwork of architectural design, the main hotel building features stucco detailing, adobe-inspired bricks, and clay roof tiles in the Mission vernacular, while the spa and ballroom building showcases wood detailing, a double-sloped roof, balconies, and exterior overhangs giving the sense that the buildings grew organically over time.

The architecture and design feature both grand gestures and fine details. Guests are greeted upon arrival via a large porte cochère with exposed heavy timber trusses. The entrance façade showcases the same stone that was used in the renovations of the Mission, mined from a local rock quarry in San Juan Capistrano. A grand spiral staircase provides a focal point for photo ops, nicely detailed with local artisan-crafted tiles on the face of each step. Custom artistic touches are programmed throughout the property including a sculpture of swallows returning home and a modern stained-glass chandelier reminiscent of the mission bells.

Multiple local artists and craftspeople were engaged throughout the design of The Inn at the Mission and were key in creating the authentic environment. Special emphasis was placed on the property's art program, which includes over 20 custom and commissioned art pieces from local San Juan Capistrano and Orange County artists. Highlights include a commissioned painting printed on Saltillo Tiles depicting the Rancho Days of San Juan Capistrano; a custom acrylic mural and timeline painted on location; a commissioned hand-sculpted swallows inset bas-relief panel entitled "Return to the Mission; and a series of local historic photographs provided by the San Juan Capistrano Historic Society; as well as other significant photography and commissioned paintings.

To further connect to the Spanish influence, hand-painted tiles were utilized throughout the property, prominently featured in one of the Inn's main features – a grand spiral staircase. Decorative and custom terracotta details are showcased both in the interior and exterior of the hotel to reflect the rich mission history. A key flooring detail features Spanish Cotto, a terracotta tile made in Mexico from locally sourced red clay. Finally, the hotel lobby also includes custom built-ins and recessed displays where artwork and artifacts, on loan from the Mission, can be prominently showcased in a gallery-like setting.



Custom art installations inspired by local symbols create photo-worthy moments as guests arrive to Le Meridien Arcadia Pasadena.

Make it Share-Worthy

Visit any place worth visiting and one will notice the many photoshoots that are simultaneously taking place. Each click of the camera is a domino effect triggering social media posts, shares, comments, and online reactions. It comes as no surprise that recent hospitality design trends have focused on the creation of dramatic and artistic backdrops, cool materials, murals, and decor that encourage promotion of the destination via social media. A larger percentage of life is being lived online, and the insatiable desire to create and capture the perfect "Instagrammable" moment has paved the way for impressive feats of architecture and design.

This trend can be easily recognized throughout the spaces and design of Le Meridien Arcadia Pasadena. From exterior hotel amenities to en-suite powder rooms, the hotel expresses high levels of detailed design and architecture that tell the story of the place while ensuring that a share-worthy moment lies around each corner. Developed by SAICP, LLC and managed by Pacifica Hotels, the premium full-service hotel features 232 rooms and suites, a fine dining restaurant, a bar lounge, and 14,000 square feet of high-design meeting and event spaces.

The architecture and interior design take cues from the mid-century modern design aesthetic characteristic of Le Meridien's brand. Born in Paris in the 1960s, the brand celebrates cultures

around the world through chic signature programs and engaging experiences that elevate the destination. For Le Meridien Pasadena Arcadia, this manifests through a myriad of sophisticated touches and art installations that pay homage to the rich equestrian heritage of the city of Arcadia.

Two custom art installations – one facing the main street and one flanking the onsite boulevard – are inspired by the swish of a horse's tail and the colorful peacock representing the city of Arcadia. The main street art wall installation features silver inlays coated in iridescent paint on an opaque charcoal background, while a bright accent piece replicating a peacock tail pattern provides a pop of color and brightness to this wall. The other installation recreates the same horse tail pattern over a transparent golden wall with internally illuminated curvaceous forms protruding in front of the golden glass.



A visionary mixed-use hospitality development, BANC combines hotel, office, residential, retail and entertainment to provide vibrant experiences in one convenient location.

Mix it up with Mixed-Use

The rise of mixed-use development has been a formidable trend that continues to expand across market sectors, merging hospitality uses with retail, office, residential, restaurant, fitness, spa, entertainment, and more. When programmed correctly, a memorable guest experience results from the vibrant synergy created by the diverse mix of design and uses, and the ease of having all of their needs met in one convenient location. As such, the formula for mixed-use hospitality

success lies in the architect's ability to assess the development context and determine the viability and appropriateness for each use, taking into consideration a host of complexities.

The success of mixed-use communities can be measured by the symbiotic relationship and resulting efficiency achieved between the different functions. Often an important selling point for municipalities and communities, a key advantage of mixed-use lies in its inherent ability to minimize the impacts of traffic, parking, and overall neighborhood congestion. In other words, hotel guests will benefit from having easy access to the full visitor experience on-site, while office users, residents, and locals will benefit daily by being able to walk from their home or office to a great restaurant, bar, gym, or amenity without having to jump in the car.

Hotel developers, too, have realized immense savings and value in the development of mixed-use hospitality. One such example is BANC, a unique urban resort entitled in Irvine, CA that combines a 258-key resort hotel, 60,000 square feet of conference space, 155,000 square feet of office space, a nightclub, rooftop beach club, restaurant, and sports club along a busy commercial thoroughfare.

While BANC is a great example of the symbiotic relationship amongst uses, the savvy design team of mixed-use and hospitality experts developed a creative solution comprising a shared parking agreement that leverages off-set parking during peak hours. The team was able to show how the office tenants typically arrive and park in the early morning hours, while the hotel guests typically arrive in the evening and depart in the morning. This solution resulted in a shared parking agreement of 600 stalls which allowed the BANC development team to remove two decks of structured parking, saving the client over \$7 million in construction costs.



Hilton Garden Inn San Jose Airport, the first modular build for the brand, is comprised of 88 modular units, resulting in cost, time, quality control and soundproofing benefits.

Reconsider Modular

While technical innovation and mass adoption of modular design and construction are still very much emerging trends, the range of benefits and future potential that modular affords in the hospitality space is an undeniable force to be reckoned with. Modular is constantly pushing the design envelope, making way for very high-end products with luxury finishes, appliances, high-tech automation and technology expressed on the outside of the building. These innovations will have a trickle-down effect, making modular, or industrial prefabrication, more accessible and applicable to all sorts of projects – similar to what Tesla did in developing its top-end cars first before producing its more accessible models.

Hilton Garden Inn San Jose Airport, the first modular hotel for the brand and developer Westlake Urban, is representative of how modular design and construction can deliver the same quality brand experience for guests as traditional construction methods. The 150-room project is comprised of 88 modular units built off-site with all furniture, fixtures and equipment in Guerdon Modular Buildings' factory in Boise, Idaho. The exterior architecture utilizes modular-friendly fiber cement panels from Nichiha that are economical, quick to install, and feature a playful pattern design consistent with the Hilton Garden Inn brand.

By leveraging the repetitive nature of hotels, modular provides substantial time and cost savings, with the added benefits of consistent quality and durability. Environmental benefits include reduced construction waste and carbon emissions from production, in addition to the reduction of truck deliveries and crane work compared to fully site-built hotels. For guests, modular units provide unparalleled soundproofing, enhancing privacy and quiet for a good night's rest. Because each modular element has its own floor, ceiling, and wall elements, it provides a high level of acoustic separation.

The hospitality industry continues to push the envelope by creating unique guest experiences in an array of avenues and offerings brought to life by the collaborative exchange between developers and architects. Innovations in design and new technologies are bringing formerly location-specific experiences closer to home. At the same time, an immersive local experience woven through the character of the hotel is attractive to both visitors and the neighboring community. Offering a mix of retail, dining, and bars creates an exciting urban atmosphere where the hotel is a destination in and of itself while minimizing traffic impacts and lessening congestion.

The key to a successful hospitality environment lies in its ability to be a retreat for guests that feels relevant while offering a variety of activities and ways to interact with the space both online and off. Having a clear vision and partnering with an architect who can add vibrancy and detail through design while maintaining operational and technical prowess will undoubtedly result in inspired guest experiences.



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