

BUILDER AND DEVELOPER

The Management Resource for Professional Homebuilders Nationwide

Volume 26 Number 6



Issue No. 295



www.penpubinc.com

June 2016

Withee Malcolm Architects



Level One is one of three multifamily communities by Withee Malcolm Architects that present a new townhome concept for an evolving market.

Cover Photo by Eric Figge Photography

Architect Profile: Withee Malcolm Architects



“Our solution was to provide a better quality of space as opposed to more square footage.”

— Dan Withee, Co-Founder, Withee Malcolm Architects

◀ The three projects share an urban sensibility, work/live options, and proximity to the Pacific.

▼ On all the townhouse models the roof deck is the new backyard, providing a welcoming space for entertaining or relaxing. At sunset at Seagrove, the roof is the place to be.



Rethinking the Living Space Model

Withee Malcolm Architects is combining the best of urban living in the Southern California coastal regions

By Sergio Flores
Photography by Jim Simmons Photography

Over the last two years, Withee Malcolm Architects has completed three new townhome projects for Taylor Morrison Homes in emerging locations in Southern California. While the site specifics vary, the designs present a new townhome concept for an evolving market.

The three multifamily communities—Level ONE, Superior Pointe, and Seagrove—were all entitled when Taylor Morrison acquired them. Consequently, this meant little could be changed on the building exteriors. However, Withee Malcolm worked with Taylor Morrison to enhance the spatial quality of the interior architecture of these three-story buildings based on the understanding of market demographics and lifestyle trends.

“Our solution was to provide a better quality of space as opposed to more square footage,”

explained Dan Withee, co-founder of Withee Malcolm Architects. “The layouts are more open. The quality of the interiors, with more natural light and better flow, help to create an emotional sense of space. Potential buyers can see themselves in the spaces, imagining living there. Also the roof decks are really extra rooms large enough for entertaining.”

The innovative housing model combines the benefits of a townhome and a live/work unit in a compact plan that takes advantage of shared, communal spaces on the ground level and optimizes private, outdoor space with expansive, individual roof decks with views.

Working on three sequential projects allowed Taylor Morrison and Withee Malcolm to tailor the layouts for the projects still in development based on responses from prospective buyers. For instance, according Dirk Thelen, Senior Associate and Director of Design, at Level

One the sales team heard that buyers were interested in a third bedroom, which was added to units at Superior Pointe. When the three-bedroom units were not as strong a draw as anticipated, with buyers preferring the more open plans, they were able to return to open living/dining/kitchen layout at Seagrove.

Often in designing multifamily homes, the architect begins with the floor plans and then moves to the building form. However, according to Thelen, “We developed the massing and elevations at the same time as the floor plans, so that form really does follow function.”

In higher density areas like Southern California, land is a scarcity. Thelen explained, “It’s about creating greater density. Vertical buildings deliver a greater yield from the land. Think of the row houses and brownstones in urban centers. It just makes sense.”

Each of the sites had characteristics and

constraints that shaped the community and influenced the architecture. The homes at Level One, Superior Pointe, and Seagrove each offer three levels of distinctive living spaces that feature open floor plans with flexible rooms that fit the homebuyer’s desire for additional space for home offices, fitness studios, hobby rooms, or playrooms.

Phil Bodem, Division President of Taylor Morrison Homes, stated, “Homes at Level One, Superior Pointe, and Seagrove appeal to a variety of potential residents who value living close to retail and commercial areas in a community that offers a mix of urban and coastal living in Southern California.”

With the ocean in close proximity to each community, outdoor living is an essential part of the design and is incorporated throughout each home. Large windows and rooftop decks create an indoor to outdoor connection many



▲ Articulated facades create a sense of movement and energy, in keeping with the spirit of the community and its lively seaside context.

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homeowners in Southern California desire.

Level One's architecture incorporates the industrial context with a contemporary residential palette of materials and colors. Darker colors and industrial finishes define the ground level environment. The upper floors, rendered in softer colors and a lighter application of materials, suggest an industrial chic, but clearly residential vocabulary.

Following a similar style, homes at Superior Pointe, also located in Costa Mesa, feature a contemporary style with first-floor live/work spaces and are priced from the low \$700s. The homes include open-concept kitchens and living areas on the second floor and fourth-floor decks. New homes offer up to three bedrooms and range in size from 1,944 to 2,048 square feet.

The clean lines of the modern architecture provide a palette with a fresh mix of materials and saturated color. The contemporary

residential design is also a fine fit in the commercial context of the nearby neighborhood with its mix of shops and restaurants.

Seagrove, in Carlsbad, Calif., features larger townhomes designed in a coastal contemporary style ranging in size from 2,099 to 2,327 square feet and are priced from the high \$800s. Like the other two communities, homes include first-floor flex rooms and rooftop decks with scenic views; however, Seagrove gives future residents the option to choose between an open, second-floor kitchen and living area, or a kitchen and separate den.

This modern interpretation of the row house in contemporary Californian architecture deploys traditional, local materials and details—wood, lap siding, stucco, asphalt shingles, balconies, and trellises. Articulated facades create a sense of movement and energy, in keeping with the spirit of the community and

its lively seaside context.

While these three communities are completed, Withee Malcolm continues to work on several multifamily projects that incorporate the new ways of meeting market demand. “In order to appeal to a wider demographic, including boomers who like many features of townhome living, but not the multiple floors and stairs they require, we are rethinking the vertical model.” He added, “We like the challenge of design and love the reward of seeing buyers find the right home for their lifestyle.”

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