

All In at The Reserve

A time-honored club revamps its original clubhouse, and every member is on the design committee.

LISA MARIE HART / DECEMBER 30, 2019 /
CURRENT PSL, HOME & DESIGN, REAL ESTATE



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Life presents endless reasons to air our grievances — the Electoral College, daylight savings time, the percentage we pay in taxes — but The Reserve seeks to right the world's wrongs with a contemporary new clubhouse in time to inaugurate the club's third decade. After more than a year in planning and construction, and at a cost of \$10 million, the refresh of the 30,000-square-foot clubhouse rests upon a solid foundation of democracy, designed in rigorous collaboration with the club's cozy membership of 196 families.

Long before welcoming its first residents in November 1998, The Reserve developers Robert J. Lowe and Ted R. Lennon of Lowe Enterprises devoted almost a decade to the act of delicately placing a 700-acre enclave between the environmentally sensitive Philip L. Boyd Deep Canyon Desert Research Center's 2,000 acres and The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens. The fact that the club's low-density domain and 21-hole golf course span two cities — Palm Desert and Indian Wells — required additional patience and persistence in securing building permits and approvals. Lowe and Lennon took their time to realize their intimate club. Defined by an inconspicuous entry drive, 26 private miles of hiking and biking trails, and native desert flora and fauna, The Reserve has always stood out by blending into its surroundings.

The heart of the activity has been The Reserve Club Village, set atop a gentle hill and anchored by the original Tuscan clubhouse. But 20 years in, the Old World décor and its formality began to feel dark and heavy. Few were shy to say they were ready for a change.

“We wanted to give members something new that would reenergize the club,” says CEO and general manager Michael Kelly, adding that appeal to potential new members factored into the clubhouse transformation. “Three years ago, our average age was 71. That dropped to 64 and now to 53.”

That youthful outlook reflects in most members' desire for a softer, more inviting contemporary design filled with natural light, comfortable furnishings, and flowing, indoor-outdoor spaces. While members elected to retain the Arkansas Stone façade, the interior was almost entirely reinvented.

A steering committee guided a democratic process of collecting and

analyzing member input, and three members (an NBC producer, art collector, and design business owner) ran the project, hanging mock-ups and three-dimensional drawings in the clubhouse for members to view and comment on. They pored over renderings, touched fabric swatches, and tested chairs for comfort and proportion.



Ambassadors for the makeover “went out almost in a viral manner to have one-on-one conversations with other members,” Kelly says. And, during “Afternoons with Mike,” the CEO hosted open discussions regarding any facet of the project.

Eighty percent of the membership voted to approve the investment, and the same percentage immediately paid their \$60,000 share, which also included a \$1.5 million renovation of the Tom Weiskopf /Jay Morrish-designed golf course and installation of efficient irrigation technology.

The renewed clubhouse by architect Robert Altevors of San Diego-based Altevors Associates and builder Robert Clapper Construction Services of Rialto showcases the preservation of its architectural bones. Archways, stonework, and eight fireplaces remain, but in reimagined settings that feel as if someone brought up the house lights.

Once static configurations now serve multiple purposes, transitioning from venues for private parties, luncheons, and brunches to host board meetings, card games, and book clubs. Each connects to the outdoors through larger, up-to-date windows and doors.





The back was opened to accommodate an alfresco kitchen on the terrace and the expanded Hawk's Nest Bar, at last liberated to the vast scenery.

"The Reserve Village sits about 4,000 feet above sea level, and we have incredible 360-degree views of the valley and four mountain ranges," notes Denise Adams, director of membership, sales, and marketing. "It's quite extraordinary when you're sitting outside for lunch or dinner. It's become very popular at sunset."

For those who appreciate an all but bygone level of decorum, the committee gifted the stylish but not stuffy Governor's Room, the one area where jeans remain prohibited.

With shadowy tapestries on textured walls both gone, bright spaces showcase contemporary wall sculpture, paintings, and photography by artists from across the United States and Mexico, including Don Ohlmeyer, a late member of The Reserve.

The leadership's desire to stay relevant not only resonated with current members but also to their extended families and potential members. Having been a part of a dozen clubhouse renovations during his career, Kelly has seen groups become divided and contentious. Not at The Reserve. "This was one of the most diligent and extensive processes I have ever seen," he says, "and the results tell the story of why it was so successful."