



Architectural Concepts

Producing a Hit - Timeshare Design Needs a Strong Producer and Director

By Georgi Bohrod, RRP

Designing a vacation timeshare resort is not a formulaic process. It is like producing a Broadway hit that brings audience kudos, critics rave reviews and box office revenue.

With all the competition, how do you ensure a block buster? You need the right cast of characters.

When casting the initial roles in the timeshare development play, developers who are serious about pleasing their owners and focusing their efforts on the correct market act as a producer would, calling in a versatile creative director while the project is still yet a concept. The creative director, along with the "producer" casts the team. The cast then works as an ensemble and includes stars and supporting actors. The roles that need to be filled for a successful production include the leading designer, someone specializing in technical construction, another with administrative capabilities and a communications specialist. With an understanding of a developer's goals, an architectural design firm can bring the developer's concept to fruition and in most cases improve upon it.

"As architectural designers our role is to capture the essence of the location and the level of desire of the client. Our mission is to transcend that spirit to architecture and design," said Margit E. Whitlock, AIA, Principal, Architectural Concepts Inc. (ACI) (San Diego, California), a San Diego firm regarded as one of the Southwest's top hospitality-oriented architectural and interior design firms.

"Timeshare development is not as easy as taking the typical two bedroom lock-off and site planning with a cookie cutter. Today's timeshare resorts call for passion and vision," the award-winning Whitlock says.

With the many travel and vacation ownership options available today, owners want to have a place that is unique, functional and embrace a certain quality they can call their own. One project that exemplifies this philosophy is ACI's ARDA Gold-Winning Cibola Vista Resort and Spa, a project of Princeton Resorts Group built on 20 acres just north of Phoenix, Arizona. The design theme reflects the early Spanish exploration of the Zuni Pueblos of the area which they described as the "Seven Cities of Cibola," the legendary cities of gold and silver.

"This folklore inspired the earliest Spanish exploration of the American Southwest," said Whitlock. "We utilized these legendary visions to develop the master plan, architecture and interior design of the resort as seven



"As architectural designers our role is to capture the essence of the location and the level of desire of the client. Our mission is to transcend that spirit to architecture and design."

Margit E. Whitlock, AIA, Principal, Architectural Concepts Inc.

interrelated 'cities.' Our purpose was to carry the theme throughout the project down to the colors and textures of the fabric. We developed an eclectic mix of old world and contemporary design to reflect the new generation of explorers, the timeshare traveler's desire to experience the desert landscape and resort lifestyle." With the vertical timeline expressed in ruin walls that transform into beautiful Spanish village architecture, the project emulates a special connection to the land and history of Arizona.



Cibola Vista is comprised of six "cities." Six cities are owners' residential villas and the seventh city is the resort's common area which consists of an extensive amenity core named "the Sunken City of Gold". There are public and private courtyards, fountains, gardens and reflecting pools throughout the resort, all connected with a series of walkways to enhance the unique village design.

The beautiful and functional environment amenities designed for the resort include a trailhead building and horse corral; multiple swimming pools, one with a lazy river feature, island oasis and whirlpool; private spas and outdoor fireplaces for each of the six residential complexes; and an 8,000-square-foot day spa. The resort facilities include a 30,000-square-foot lobby with a bar, fine dining restaurant, and administration and sales areas. The project master plan includes a 100-room, four-star hotel.

Whitlock emphasizes, the owner's first impression begins at the onset with a "sense of arrival" to the resort. Magnificent landscaping and clear signage start to set the tone for the experience. At Cibola Vista the historic setting begins with a magnificent "ruin wall" maintained from original buildings of another era. Everything from the location of the building(s), positioning of the views and pleasing vistas created from the natural landscape play a major role in setting the theme. In the theatre, this would be setting and lighting design which creates the palate for a wonderful vacation.

ACI followed this "setting the stage" design process to transform Ocean Front Development's Desert Sky Las Vegas apartment complex into a equestrian style timeshare resort. Located south of the Las Vegas Strip, the project is inspired by the neighboring hotel/casino and equestrian center known as South Coast Casino.

The philosophy of "setting the stage" is dominant in converting the 170 unit apartment complex into an attractive, inviting and relaxing timeshare community. ACI focused their design research on the equestrian influence on mankind as a catalyst for the direction of the project, inspiring many unique details that contribute to a successful design that changes the entire image of sticks and bricks to a restful retreat from the hustle and bustle of the Las Vegas strip.

Kristine Steffen, the Director of Interior Design for Architectural Concepts says it is not just the exterior of the resort which builds a sense of place. The "wow" factor needs to be in each and every unit as well, truly reflecting the theme of the setting from the inside out.

For instance in the award winning Cibola Vista, the interior units followed the legendary theme of the Spanish explorer but transcended it into the 21st century. The warm, intriguing interiors are an eclectic, but with a thematic mix of tile, stone, iron, rich colors and just a hint of contemporary art. ACI emphasized travels of the explorer with maps and globes to hand painted tiles depicting the story of Cibola.

Each element of a successful resort needs to flow into the other. From the entrance, to an inviting lobby, to the pools and activity centers, the theme must be consistent and support both an enjoyable vacation and profitable sales.

Since each project has its own sense of place and its own sense of history, the architectural designer must be skilled in defining the developer's goals; it is the role of an architectural design firm to bring the developer's concept to fruition and even improve upon it. Most importantly this must be done within budget and on time. No two projects are alike, but with a firm specializing in vacation ownership and hospitality design, you will be one step ahead of the game in having a dramatic blockbuster on the market with happy owners and members at play on vacation.

Margit E. Whitlock, AIA, has more than 20 years of extensive experience in the design and management of multi-million dollar projects that includes programming, site analysis, master planning, design, construction documents and construction administration. She directs a staff of architectural and interior designers and drafters in the preparation of concept studies, master planning and programming, design, value engineering, construction documents and construction administration.

Photos: Cibola Vista Resort & Spa, Phoenix, Arizona



For more than 20 years, ACI's creative design professionals have been producing beautiful and functional environments for the timeshare, fractional and hospitality industry.

Architectural Concepts, Inc. is a full service planning, architectural and interior design firm. The company received the ARDA 2006 highest international award for resort design and architecture award Cibola Vista Resort and Spa in Peoria, AZ; also it has nearly completed the architectural and interior design for The Bond, a 118 unit luxury timeshare resort in Las Vegas, Nevada. ACI primarily focuses on the hospitality and commercial markets. ACI's Principal, Margit E. Whitlock, AIA, is a licensed architect in California, Arizona, Nevada and Texas. For more information about Architectural Concepts visit www.4designs.com or phone: 619-531-0110.