

Built In The '60s, Is El Rancho Vista Estates The Perfect Place?

By Erik Rosenow

El Rancho Vista Estates became Palm Springs' most recent Neighborhood Organization in 2010, but its history dates back to the mid-century era that many associate with the City.

Roy Fey, a developer with numerous other projects in the desert, brought in the team of Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison to design roughly 70 homes. This was the first residential subdivision that Wexler and Harrison worked on. While designed with three basic floor plans, the tract has more of a custom home neighborhood look due to alternating elevations, rooflines, use of concrete block and the houses' situation to the street.



One of roughly 70 Wexler-Harrison designed homes in El Rancho Vista Estates.

These homes, which were built between 1959 and 1960, are fantastic examples of mid-century architecture due to the fact that very few have been altered beyond recognition.

Fey further expanded the neighborhood with 20 examples of more standard-style ranch homes and added his name to one street (East Avenida Fey Norte). The neighborhood was eventually completed in the late 1970s with 20 more homes. Given the low density and the fact that there is only one through-street (with eight cul-de-sacs) El Rancho Vista Estates maintains an intimate feeling of community.

It is common to run into friends either walking their dogs or playing bocce ball in the adjacent Gateway Park, which was completed in 2010.

Though it lacks the star-studded cache of other Palm Springs neighborhoods, El Rancho Vista Estates has had a few notable residents. Architect Ric Harrison lived at 1593 Via Roberto Miguel. Fitness guru Jack LaLanne owned home(s) in the neighborhood (1593 and/or 1627 Via Roberto Miguel). More recently, actor and comedian Andy Dick resided at 3623 E. Avenida Fey Norte.

And current residents comprise an eclectic group. In addition to retirees and full-time resident professionals, a large contingent of artists and designers make El Rancho Vista Estates their home, including filmmakers, architects, musicians and those employed by the entertainment industry.

Beginning in the early 2000s, many of the Wexler homes began to be tastefully refurbished, bringing them back to their mid-century glory. For any fan of Palm Springs architecture, a walk through the neighborhood to see the recent results is a must. In fact, the neighborhood was featured on a home tour honoring the work of Wexler. Organized by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation in January 2010, "Wexler Weekend" showcased nine superb examples

of Wexler and Harrison designs. Hundreds of participants walked the streets of El Rancho Vista Estates and got an intimate view of the interiors of these homes.

Whether drawn to the fantastic architecture, the intimate neighborhood feel, or the breathtaking views of Mt. San Jacinto, El Rancho Vista Estates gives exactly what the neighborhood sales brochure promised: the “Good Palm Springs Life” and “Fun In The Sun”.