

## **LA QUINTA SHOOTS HOLE-IN-ONE WITH WORLD-CLASS RECREATIONAL RESORT**

### ***City Accomplishes A Number of Goals With One Incredible Golf Destination***

An avid golfer might be skeptical about finding lush fairways situated in the heart of a sun-drenched California desert. But over the past few decades, La Quinta has built a reputation as one of the premier golf destinations in the nation.

In fact, last year the *Robb Report* named the City of La Quinta “America’s Ultimate Golf Destination” in its Best Places to Live issue. Since the advent of television golf in the 1960s, the country has been discovering the allure of La Quinta – dreaming of a life filled with year-round sun, incredible golf, and the beauty of the purple-hued Santa Rosa Mountains.

Not only was the dream showcased through prestigious golf tournaments and celebrity sightings, but also through the glamorous lifestyles of those living in exclusive resort developments.

In 1984, PGA West was established – securing La Quinta’s position as “The Western Home of Golf in America.” The massive project was the first substantial multiple-course residential development in the western United States. Some of golf’s biggest names – like Jack Nicholas, Arnold Palmer and Pete Dye – were clambering to design their own course at PGA West, which helped make the development a coveted address for golfers and non-golfers alike. Other upscale golf resorts moved into La Quinta, and soon, folks seeking the ultimate golf lifestyle propelled the City into a steady growth trend.

### **LOVING LIFE IN LA QUINTA (BUT WHERE CAN I GOLF?)**

By the end of the century, La Quinta was well known for its unparalleled golf. And while the leaders of La Quinta appreciated the City’s famed status as a golf mecca, they also recognized that much of the phenomenal golf in La Quinta was behind the closed doors of private country clubs and not available to the public.

In the mid-90s, it became increasingly apparent that the City needed to create a golf venue that was accessible to everyone. Furthermore, La Quinta’s City Council and management team envisioned a venture that could serve not only as a golf amenity, but also an economic development opportunity.

The City then commissioned market studies to determine whether or not La Quinta had the market to support a public golf/hotel/retail development. Indeed, each market study reinforced the fact that – not only was there a future market in La Quinta to support a major municipal golf resort – but the potential revenue from such a venture was essential to help fulfill the increasing needs of this growing City.

Accordingly, starting in 1996, golf and the golf resort concept became part of the City's economic development strategy as highlighted in the City's annually adopted economic development plan.

As it became clear the vision for a golf resort project was sustainable, City leaders tackled the next hurdle: Funding. Redevelopment dollars are often used in the restoration of dilapidated areas. La Quinta first used redevelopment funding in the 1980s to address flooding and drainage problems.

After these issues were addressed, La Quinta's Redevelopment Agency saw an opportunity to use redevelopment dollars to enhance economic development in a way directly related to the City's primary industry: resort/recreation development. Redevelopment dollars would serve as the base to develop the infrastructure (i.e., land, streets, and sewers) necessary to accommodate and support high-end resort development.

### **LOOKING FOR 'THE GEM' IN LA QUINTA'S DESERT**

Nicknamed "The Gem of the Desert," La Quinta was now truly in search of that 'gem' piece of desert property that would be the perfect venue for its golf resort development. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, La Quinta still had ample undeveloped land to choose from and City officials began seriously looking at four pieces of prime property. Negotiations began with landowners, and the project was steadily becoming a reality.

One of the properties the City pursued was owned by KSL Resorts, which operates the renowned La Quinta Resort & Club – from which the City's name was derived. The La Quinta Resort & Club was built in 1926 and became an exclusive getaway for celebrities and the wealthy elite. Today, the Resort & Club maintains the same quaint, early California charm as in its early days – offering a secluded, upscale hospitality experience for its guests.

KSL Resorts was interested in the prospect of selling its land to the City, but expressed concern over the competition a new golf/hotel/retail resort would pose for the La Quinta Resort & Club. To finalize negotiations, the City negotiated restrictions on the property with KSL that limit hotel size, amenities and price point until June 2009.

These restrictions were critical to KSL and acceptable to the City in that the City's market studies had indicated marginal market support for a resort hotel in the short term, and the City did not want to take steps that might harm an existing anchor hotel in any event.

### **MAKING – AND PRESERVING – HISTORY**

In June 2002, the City of La Quinta's Redevelopment Agency closed escrow on 525 acres of extraordinary land, which was purchased from KSL Resorts. The property – which is nestled along the breathtaking Santa Rosa Mountains – is also rich with a captivating history. Part of the property was the ancient homeland of the Cahuilla

Indians, and another section of the land once rested underwater for thousands of years. The former shoreline is even visible today along the mountains' baseline. More recently, the site had been the home to the Howard Ahmanson (founder of Home Savings & Loan) family ranch.

Actually taking title to the land was an exciting leap forward in bringing this recreational development to life. Soon thereafter, the La Quinta Redevelopment Agency was moving ahead – working out environmental issues with institutions such as the California Department of Fish and Game Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At the same time, the Agency was selling bonds to raise funds for the project—as well as beginning the process of hiring planning, architectural and engineering consultants.

Perhaps one of the most important consultants retained during these early stages was the firm that would prepare the project's conceptual land use plan. GMA International won the planning contract competing with over 20 firms in November 2002. MDS Engineering was retained to oversee the preliminary engineering. These firms spent the next six months drafting a comprehensive Master Plan for the project. Numerous public meetings were held, a website was established, and every La Quinta resident received a postcard inviting them to share ideas for the project's development. The La Quinta Redevelopment Agency formally adopted the conceptual land use plan for the project in May 2003.

Once the master plan was in place, the Agency continued to bring on consultants to coordinate a variety of tasks – including the selection of Palmer Course Design Company as the golf course architect. The company, founded by golf legend, Arnold Palmer, has been recognized as a top golf course design firm – and the City of La Quinta knew they needed “the best” to design a course that was on par with the caliber of land selected to host this world-class recreational destination.

### **GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN – SILVERROCK RANCH IS BORN**

In July 2003, the project finally received an official name. The much-anticipated public resort will be known as SilverRock Ranch. Some of the proposed land uses for SilverRock Ranch include a championship tournament golf course; a resort golf course; multipurpose trails and pocket parks; casitas and a residence club; a five-star resort hotel, spa and convention center; resort retail merchants; a village lake; a golf course practice area; a boutique/condominium hotel; and a golf clubhouse and community center.

The La Quinta Redevelopment Agency believed from the beginning that if they were going to create this incredible golf experience, they'd have to do it right. According to Mark Weiss, the Agency's assistant executive director and SilverRock Ranch's project manager, the City's goal in building SilverRock Ranch is to create a special place for everyone to enjoy.

“We want SilverRock Ranch to be the cornerstone of what this community is all about,” adds Weiss. “La Quinta residents will have intimate access to our awe-inspiring

mountains. They will be able to experience the tremendous golf that has made La Quinta famous. And the additional tax revenue generated by SilverRock Ranch will help us provide new amenities for our City.”

SilverRock Ranch’s first golf course broke ground in January 2004, and the development will soon be on its way to becoming one of the top golf resorts in the country. Once completed, SilverRock Ranch will become a destination with something for everyone – public golf, tournament-quality golf, outdoor activities, shopping, entertainment and dining. It will be a place of great pride for La Quinta residents, and a refuge that tourists will want to visit again and again.

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