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Desert Beauty
Unique design allows
for rare-find in Arizona

Desert Beauty

A touch of Spanish colonial, ranch territorial and Tuscan influences pull this house together with the option of a basement...in Arizona?

West of the Agua Fria River, in part of Phoenix's West Valley, Vistancia stands quietly, respecting the land and natural history of the desert around it. In Terracina, a gated T.W. Lewis community, and one of the 11 neighborhoods in Vistancia, lies Triana.

Triana became the best-selling model for Tempe, Ariz.-based builder T.W. Lewis since opening its three models in Vistancia last April. Besides creating a trademark flowing floor plan, T.W. Lewis adds a rare option with this plan — a basement. “There’s not many builders that do basements in Arizona, but we’re one of the few that do,” states Patrick McGlone, director of architecture at T.W. Lewis.

Opportunity

T.W. Lewis viewed Vistancia as a great opportunity to build in a higher-level community and build on its long-standing relationship with Sunbelt Holdings. Pat Adler, vice president of land at T.W. Lewis says, “We bought out at Vistancia because we know what their standards

are, and they’re in line with ours,” says Adler. “We’ve had success with them at Power Ranch and McDowell Mountain Ranch. We really enjoy working with them.”

With that in mind McGlone, took advantage of adding value and style to this community by creating new ideas for the garage layout, which appears in the Triana floor plan.

Besides offering the traditional three-car front approach garage, a split garage option and several rear garage options and have been offered for Vistancia. “We wanted to capture the spirit of Vistancia and still give the T.W. Lewis trademark flow to the floor plan, yet also take care of the design review considerations of four-sided architecture,” says McGlone.

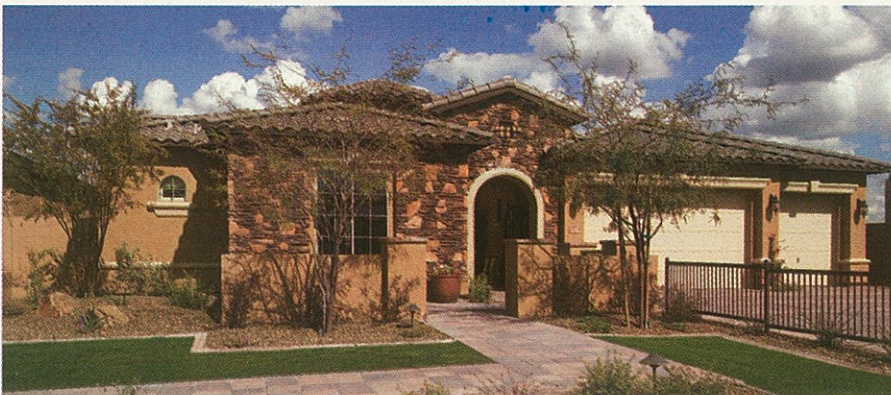
“With Triana, we set the three-car

garage back from the living area so it’s deemphasized. On a specific elevation, [we] added a portico element to allow a courtyard entry experience for the buyer, which is different from the other two elevations,” says McGlone.

By taking the Triana plan and modifying its elevation, T.W. Lewis created a different feel and massing. “We still created some envelope projections on the side of the house, so you get a lot of play with the architecture from the side and the rear,” states McGlone.

McGlone says they tried to take a look at the traditional buyer liking the three-car front garage and also tried to give a

STONE ELEMENTS and earthen hues were utilized to define Tuscan style, which creates a layered effect.



VITAL STATS

Triana, Vistancia, Arizona

- Location:** Peoria, Ariz.
- Neighborhood:** Terracina
- Builder/ Architect/ Interior Developer:** T.W. Lewis, Tempe, Ariz.
- Developer:** Sunbelt Holdings, Scottsdale, Ariz.
- Models open:** April 2004
- Home type:** Single-family detached
- Sales to date:** 46 of 56 sold
- Community size:** 56 lots in Terracina (a T.W. Lewis community within Vistancia)
- Square footage:** 3,530 - 4,830 (with basement option)
- Price:** \$529,900 - \$646,800
- Hard cost:** \$93.76 (per square foot, excluding land)
- Buyer profile:** Upscale families, move-up buyers (in-state and out-of-state), empty nesters

MORE+

DECORATING TASTES OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

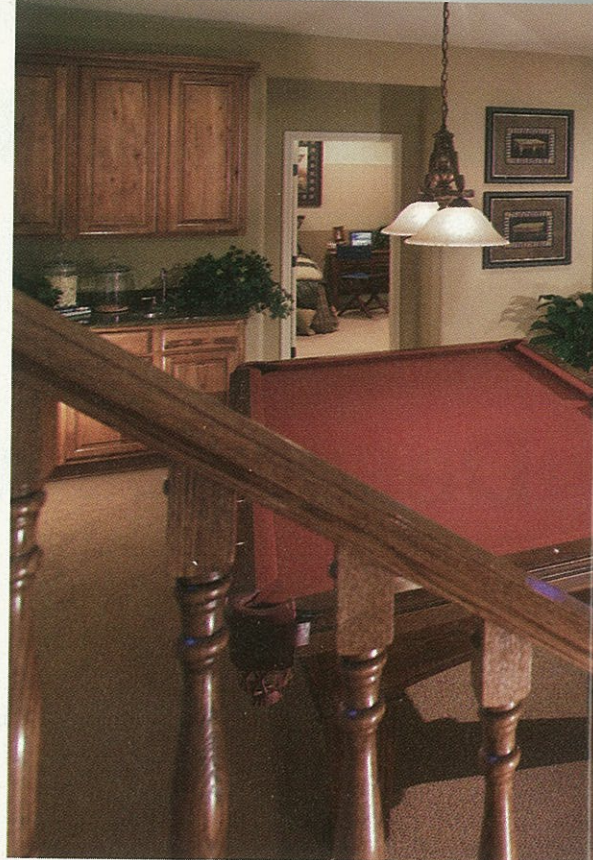
Marianne Hammel, design consultant at T.W. Lewis, decorated the Triana model with a Frank Lloyd Wright theme in mind. Working with their own in-house design center, Hammel worked within the company's standard house options to create this look. According to Hammel, with Wright it was always the idea of very simple, clean lines, none of what T.W. Lewis normally offers with the Tuscan/European look. Materials from nature were always very important to his architectural designs, so Hammel tried to carry that into the Triana model. Some of the elements used throughout the model include: travertine floors, slate on the kitchen back splash, and light fixtures with simple, clean lines.

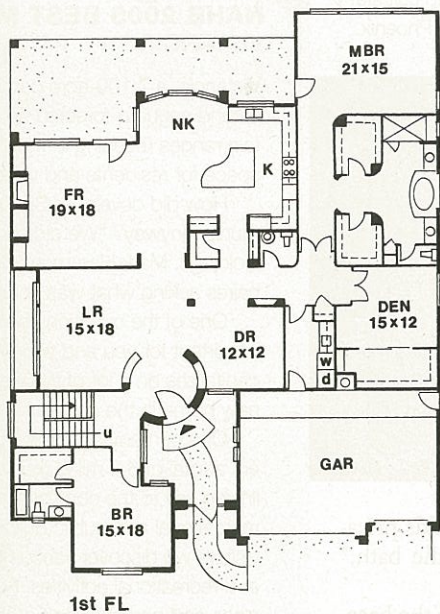
nice memory point as buyers walk through the house — still giving it a dynamic floor plan. “Overall, we knew this was a high-profile project, so we wanted diversity,” says McClone.

Obstacles

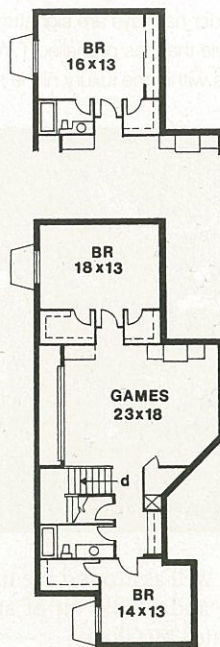
Designing around the three-car garage front for the Triana plan was a challenge. The solution? Change the design plan regarding where to place the massing of the house — the living areas and the master bedroom. The resolution for T.W. Lewis became creating a good split from the master bedroom to the secondary bedroom by placing them on opposite ends of the floor plan. Through a lot of different iterations, McClone says, “I basically exploded the house into different room parts. “I tried to put those parts together to achieve a good read from the back of the house, the courtyard entry experience, and the split from the master bedroom to the secondary bedroom.”

Since basements are a rare option for Phoenix home buyers, T.W. Lewis wanted to create a unique layout. “We tried to mimic the design to the





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parameters set on the first floor.”

McGlone says, “One of the things I wanted to do was run the basement straight across downstairs.” To make this happen, McGlone inset the game room area and created groupings of windows. “Most basements out here have five foot window intervals,” says McGlone. “To get rid of that sober, institutionalized feel, we molded 15 feet of glass together and created a light well.”

Draining the light well challenged McGlone. “We initially looked at trying to do two different pump systems to adequately drain water out,” says McGlone. But the real problem with the drainage lay within the roof of the house. “The roofs were coming into the well, so we designed another roof element that came over the drainage area.”

Outcome

Triana has three exterior elevations options — Spanish colonial, ranch territorial and Tuscan. “We wrapped the entire house with exposed rafter tails to create the Spanish colonial look,” states McGlone. “We also utilized stone massing elements for the Tuscan, to capture that old world feel.”

Triana offers surprises and options inside as well. An intimate 12 x 15 courtyard space with seating starts the entry experience. Upon entering the home, guests walk through a 16-foot circular rotunda tower with the dining and living room to either side of the entrance. To the right, the dining room opens with a curved wall.

“Buyers not only look at the floors, but look up to see how they can add visual interest,” explains McGlone.

In the family room, an optional fireplace can be added on several different walls. One option — a two-way fireplace on the wall between the living room and the family room — is a first-time option for Vistanica. “We had never done a two-way fireplace, so we tried to set up this relationship of adjacent walls between the living and family,” says McGlone.

A design trend found in most models today is large kitchens attached to the family room. T.W. Lewis, of course, follows that trend, but adds its own spin with the island configuration. “We really challenged ourselves to come up with a unique island design because we really see buyers enjoying the large cookout space,” says McGlone. To make that work, McGlone created a unique-shaped island made to help break up the space. Also for entertaining purposes, a butler’s pantry sits between the kitchen and dining for easy access.

The master bedroom first leads into the master bath with his and hers walk-in closets. “Setting up the double master walk-in closets was important to us,” says McGlone. “A lot of buyers really like to have split closets.”

A snail shower is an option that 70% of the buyers of the Triana plan opted for instead of the basic shower in the master bath. Not only does it allow for more personal space in the shower, but it also gives customers the option to design their bathroom with glass blocks set within the snail shower

FEW BUILDERS IN PHOENIX

offer basements, and even fewer include basements over 1,000 square feet. The Triana basement is big and bright with nine foot ceiling heights, a wall of windows and the same high level of finish as found elsewhere in the home.

GRACEFUL ARCHWAYS, volume ceilings and wider hallways are signature elements of the style that has propelled T.W. Lewis to cult status within the luxury niche market in Phoenix.



as well as around the tub. “It adds privacy and a little bit of style to the bath,” states McGlone.

Depending on the option of the basement will determine the amount of secondary bedrooms throughout the home — two on the main floor if the basement isn’t included. If a buyer opts for the basement, the second bedroom is eliminated, but the buyer gains two more bedrooms in the basement.

When coming down the basement steps, guests enter into the game room with an optional dry bar and an optional built-in media wall. Two bedrooms also appear downstairs on either side of the game room. So what really makes Triana the best-selling plan? The basement option. “It’s interesting to note that about half our basement sales [throughout T.W. Lewis] have been Triana [at Terracina],” states McGlone.

Of the 16 Triana plans sold to date, eight of the models include a basement. The model with the basement is currently priced at \$646,800, and without the basement is priced at \$529,900 — a break down of \$116,900 for an extra 1,300 sq. ft. of space.

Overall, T.W. Lewis strived to create a diverse product for Vistancia. “We were trying to obtain a diverse and sophisticated community within Vistancia with this product line,” explains McGlone. “I think we accomplished that with the varying elevational styles, echoing authenticity, and the diversity in garage placement as well as the courtyard design.” **PB**

NAHB 2005 BEST MASTER PLANNED COMMUNITY VISTANCIA

Vistancia, a 7,100-acre community in Peoria, Ariz. features heavily vegetated washes and saguaro-forested uplands, and is set against a stunning backdrop of mountain ranges receding in the distance. Over 1,000 acres of Vistancia will be open space for residents and visitors to explore the region’s many natural wonders.

How did developer Sunbelt Holdings come up with this master-planned community anyway? “We did a lot of research,” claims senior vice president of Sunbelt Holdings, Mark Hammons. “We sent out thousands and thousands of questionnaires asking what was important to them in a community.”

One of the questions being: If you were looking to relocate, what would be important for you and your family? “We think we created an environment that really capitalizes on a lot of the wants and needs of people who are looking to purchase a new home in the community,” says Hammons.

One of many amenities found within Vistancia is the Discovery Trail, which covers a total of 6.7 miles round trip — 3.35 miles each way. This trail serves as the linking key to the community from one neighborhood to another, as well as the recreational and public buildings within Vistancia. Along the trail path, residents and visitors will discover various thematic zones that offer a wide range of educational and recreational activities. For example, the Solar Garden offers travelers an up-close and personal look at the solar system. Along the downward spiraling trail, scaled models of the planets hang from educational panels containing information about each planet.

Upon entry to Vistancia, visitors come across the Mountain Vista Club, a 15,000 sq. ft. community complex that includes several features. The first being a 5,100-sq. ft. Discovery Center explaining Vistancia’s vision for the community as well as exploring a streetscape featuring 33 model homes by six builders in one location.

An 8,000-sq. ft. basketball gymnasium with bleachers and areas for basketball, volleyball, and fitness classes is found beyond the Discovery Center. The building also includes a reception area, a media lounge and a game room.

The Mountain Vista Club also features a 2,000-sq. ft. multipurpose space for meetings and informal gatherings. Three swimming pools, including a water slide pool, a resort-style pool and a heated lap pool are also included.

An outdoor amphitheater for small-concert venues, acres of turf and a large play area is within walking distance, followed by four tennis courts.

Also located within the property of Vistancia is a Gary Panks-designed Trilogy Golf Club, a 7,225-yard, 18-hole championship daily fee course. An 11,000-sq. ft. golf clubhouse is home to the Verde Grill, a full-service, upscale restaurant featuring an eclectic mix of traditional and modern dishes with a Southwestern twist.

The future of Vistancia will include other golf courses, four elementary school sites, one high school, two city regional parks, five city neighborhood parks, and more than 6 million square feet of commercial space.

In order to make Vistancia work, Sunbelt Holdings had to make it a priority to create something that would draw home buyers in. “What we thought from day one was to create a lifestyle environment that would appeal to a large majority of home buyers,” says Hammons.

One of the biggest obstacles Sunbelt came across was building the infrastructure to create the community. “Because of the extension of some of the road ways, we built, along with the city of Peoria, a regional waste water treatment facility,” says Hammons. “We had to bring water to the community.”

So, the big question is, how well has the community been perceived? “Truthfully, you could look at everything, but what’s most important is the market response,” states Hammons. “It has exceeded our expectations. I think it really had a lot to do with implementation of the plan and the design elements involved.”