

# Eureka!

It's the new California gold rush. From Downtown to the Pacific, LA is building upward and outward at a dizzying pace. Meet five civic visionaries who are determined to make Los Angeles the great American city of the 21st century. Va-va-va-boom!

BY SCOTT HUVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRAD SWONETZ

## Arches of Triumph

An appropriately heroic gateway to the eternal city of LA, architect Michael Maltzan's Sixth Street Viaduct will be a marvel of modern-day design.

“I believe in this city,” says architect Michael Maltzan of the Los Angeles he’s been integral in transforming, “for everything it is, both good and bad. I have an extraordinary optimism and belief in the reality of Los Angeles as a unique and extraordinary version of what it means to be a city in contemporary terms.”

Having already contributed several significant works to the changing face of LA, from large private homes to socially ambitious housing for the formerly homeless—“The ambition for every one of them was that they were trying to say something progressive about the city”—Maltzan, 53, has a slate of genuine game changers ahead, contributing to an exciting cumulative effect on the local map. “All of them together hopefully do relate to a series of ideas about how the city is evolving.”

The design team—Michael Maltzan Architecture, HNTB, Hargreaves Associates, and A.C. Martin Partners—will make over the Sixth Street Viaduct for the City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering with a design that will dramatically transform the iconic, noir-ish bridge into a sleek, swooping futuristic structure, radically advancing the way LA moves both vehicles and people. “If there’s one form that characterizes Los Angeles, maybe more than any other form in the city, it’s infrastructure,” he says, “and we have an opportunity to represent, to build what that new version of infrastructure might look like.”

And One Santa Fe, the marquis mixed-use development also designed by Maltzan, reconfigures the adjoining dormant Downtown industrial area into an epicenter for the emerging Arts District, says the architect, “a more vital, vibrant, intense amplification of the life that has taken place there, creating a sense of permanence and dynamism for that neighborhood.” He’ll also have a hand in modifying Piggyback Yard’s 125 river-adjacent acres into a lush city center and rail hub. “I can’t think of another project that would have a greater effect on the way the city sees itself, thinks about itself, and comes together.”

“Change in the city is a reality,” Maltzan explains, citing LA’s perpetually dynamic structural fluidity as one of the principal lures that led him and his wife to “beeline” here immediately upon graduating from Harvard University in 1988. “It continues to reinvent itself, and that is leading right now to a new iteration of Los Angeles.... Seeing that in its nascent form, at the very beginning, is as exciting a thing as I can imagine for an architect.”



# Sky's the Limit!

Mega-developer Bill Witte wants to take you higher... and higher.

Real estate developer Bill Witte recalls driving by a housing project he developed and pointing out to his then-6-year-old daughter, saying, “We developed that.” She quizzed him: Did he design it? No, he appointed the architect. Did he build it? No, he hired the contractors. “She goes, ‘Well, what *did* you do?’” Witte, 61, chuckles now. “A developer is kind of like the producer, putting all the pieces together.”

As president and managing partner of Related California, an urban and multifamily housing development company, Witte’s long history working on various governmental housing boards, departments, and commissions throughout the country is unique in his field—navigating the oft-complex community processes taught him patience and nurtured in him “the ability to listen, to evolve, to make things happen,” he says. “That’s stood me in very good stead, because these types of projects do not happen if you can’t do that successfully.”

Foremost on his plate is Downtown’s transformative three-block Grand Avenue Project, including the completed \$56 million Grand Park—“a huge success”—and an ambitious residential tower and retail project alongside and across the street from a planned world-class museum conceived by philanthropist Eli Broad. “We’re going to create a much more vibrant neighborhood,” says Witte. “You need to give people a good reason to shop and eat and live there. The best case in each of those uses—hotel, residential, and retail—really pop. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

Across town, luxurious residential complex Ocean Avenue South marks the first significant development in Santa Monica’s southern seaside corridor in two decades. “We’re really branding a neighborhood,” he says, noting it’s already “become kind of the epicenter of cool.... This whole stretch of South Ocean Avenue was kind of neither fish nor fowl—there was no *there* there. Yet it could at least be the central spine of this greater Civic Center area. Now the city’s building this park right across the street. You take all of this together—even though there are no people populating this place yet—and you can already see that there is a streetscape.”

“LA is certainly in the forefront of cities that are constantly dealing with change,” adds Witte. “Here, people are like, ‘Yeah, that’s okay. Be a little different. Get outside the box.’ This is a dynamic place.” **LAC**

