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NEW HOMES ADVERTISING INSIDE

HOME

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LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

A NICE OUTLOOK: Kahi Lee designed this residence, "Hollywood Noir," at the W Hollywood. Some buyers will live at the hotel; others will use it as an office.

HOTEL AS HOME

GARY FRIEDMAN Los Angeles Times

Guest in residence? The concept offers a bevy of perks 24/7 to the well-heeled and mobile.

BY VALLI HERMAN >>> Moments after the private elevator in the Montage Beverly Hills slides open, the staff warmly greets Larry Field and ushers him to a pool-view seat at the rooftop Conservatory Grill. The hostess gives him a hug. Servers nod in recognition.

"Mr. Field, anything you want to eat, the chef will make," says the waiter, who, nevertheless, proffers a menu.

Now this is the life. Field is the first and, so far, the only "resident guest" at the Montage, meaning his $7-million condominium set within the hotel development comes with

THE GOOD LIFE: Larry Field, above, sits in his $7-million residence at the Montage Beverly Hills, which he had designed by Darrell Schmitt, who also did the hotel's interiors. His tissues, at left, are fanned by maids. The chef will prepare any dish he desires.

The hotel lifestyle

[**Hotels,** from E1]

It's a new spin on an old but alluring idea: hotel as home. This spring, two other high-profile properties in the area — the W Hollywood Hotel & Residences and the Ritz-Carlton Residences at LA Live — will begin handing over the keys to homes set inside hotel complexes. All promise luxury accommodations and the kind of pampered, room-serviced life that beckons travelers to check in. The difference? Residents don't have to check out.

The perks that attract potential buyers today are the same that filled hotels with long-term residents in the last century, said Paul Groth, a professor of architecture history at UC Berkeley and author of a history of residential hotels in the United States.

Then, as now, "most of the people who lived in hotels also had homes elsewhere," Groth said. Living in a hotel meant that "they didn't have to maintain a city home or keep a staff of servants. They could also entertain on a more lavish scale in a hotel, because they didn't have to have their own ballroom," he said. "It made sense for a lot of people."

The convenience of round-the-clock service, a central location and a prestigious address have long made upscale hotels attractive to the all-hours lifestyle of the rich, famous and mobile, Groth said.

No wonder, then, that celebs such as John Lennon, Johnny Depp and John Belushi lived (and in some cases died) in the kitchenette-equipped rooms at the Chateau Marmont, or that Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Howard Hughes called the Beverly Hills Hotel and its bungalows home. (Long-term guests at the Pink Palace can still book rooms by the month or longer — and get the 15.2% city and occupancy taxes waived if they stay at least 30 days.)

The Beverly Wilshire Beverly Hills, a Four Seasons Hotel, was home to Warren Beatty. He spent 15 years in the Veranda Suite during the '60s and '70s. The hotel fielded love notes from fans of Elvis Presley, who took up residence while filming the 1960 western "Flaming Star."

The late Thelma Becker became an in-house celebrity after living at what is now called the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles for 57 years. When she retired on a fixed income in the 1970s, the hotel gave her a special rate: $33 a night.

Hotel residents of yesteryear may have had prestige, but today they also want control, the kind that comes with ownership. Unlike time shares or earlier forms of hotel-condo developments, these new L.A. developments don't require owners to rent their units to transient guests part of the year.

Field was free to personalize his three-bedroom Montage residence with custom furniture and artwork. He hired Darrell Schmitt, who created the hotel's interiors, to incorporate Marc Chagall paintings, a vintage cash register and Field's bar mitzvah portrait into an elegant neutral palette. Schmitt also designed a desk and table and arranged the living room furniture to allow meetings for 20 to 30 people.

Field, a Beverly Hills real estate developer, is downsizing from several homes but sees the Montage as anything but a sacrifice. He lists what he's gaining — a gym, a barber, a person to accept deliveries, cafes, restaurants, piano bars — and also talks of what he's giving up, including the gardener, the alarm company, the pest control company and the repairmen.

He's giddy about the little things: the crisp Frette sheets, the monogrammed pillow that the hotel provides. Maids fold his tissues into a fan and leave Godiva chocolates on his pillow.

"It's somewhat of an intangible, but what we're really selling is the lifestyle," said Alan Fuerstman, founder of Montage Hotels. He said buyers have one thing in common: a love of hotels.

That's what attracted Reno Rollé, chief executive of Red Rock Pictures, to the W Hollywood. Rollé, a frequent guest at W hotels, was one of the first to buy at the Hollywood and Vine complex, partly because work frequently draws him to L.A. from his home in Ojai.

"We had an office on Sunset Boulevard, but I thought the W would be perfect for meetings," he said.

When people come to meet, Rollé said, he can greet them in a grand lobby, order a drink, have a snack and charge it to his account.

"There is a lot of potential prestige in having an address there, but it's also about the convenience — laundry, room service, housekeeping, valet, concierge service."

He's planning to outfit his 1,100-square-foot space as a home office that can also accommodate his family, guests or business associates. With units selling for about $530 per square foot and up, the purchase made economic sense too. The condo will cost less than his office space on Sunset, Rollé said.

"We have many people who want a home office away from home," said Russ Filice, the director of sales for the residences at W Hollywood. One buyer may turn his pad into a media room so that he doesn't have to remake a room in his home, Filice said. "Another guy doesn't really want guests in his house, but they entertain a lot, so it's a guest house away from home — but with a staff of 500 built in."

At the Ritz-Carlton LA Live, where 224 residences will coexist with 123 hotel rooms in a 54-story tower, interest has come from Russia, Japan and Kuwait. Prospective buyers have included ardent Lakers fans who want easier access to the adjacent Staples Center as well as businesspeople from the worlds of sports, music, fashion and finance. At least one future resident is a student at nearby USC.

"It's sort of redefined the whole concept of student housing," said Laurie Miskuski, director of sales and marketing for the property's developer, AEG. Tuition at the private college looks like pocket change next to condos at the Ritz, which are priced from $1.4 million to $5 million. (Oh, unless you want a penthouse. Then you're looking at $10 million.)

The renaissance of the hotel as home represents more than a real estate trend. For many, it's a dream. It's Eloise at the Plaza, all grown up, with preferential access to the hotel spa and nightclub.

"There are certain people for whom this will be a party pad," said interior designer Mark Cutler, who created one of the model residences at the W. "But there also is a group of people for whom living in a hotel has always been a fantasy."

Who wouldn't love eggs Benedict delivered on a silver tray at any hour? Or the chance to be play voyeur in an ever-shifting scene?

Although some might gripe at forever sharing a pool with strangers, the devoted hotel fan may see a daily vacation, a life of luxury and ease played out with more patio umbrellas, stemware and staff than any mansion could offer. More star sightings. More encounters with well-heeled humanity.

For Field, however, the fantasy does come with a downside.

"It's true, very true," he said. Being a resident of a hotel very well could ruin the experience of being a guest at one. "But I'll risk it."

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Poliform Unit at The Residences at @ Hollywood

Photographs by LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

RITZY PAD: The 224 condominiums at Ritz-Carlton Residences at LA Live range from $1.4 million to $5 million, save for the penthouses, which are $10 million.

HIGH LIVING: The 54-story Ritz-Carlton tower at LA Live looks over the city. This is the living room and dining area of a two-bedroom model unit. There's a pool deck on the 26th floor.

The concierge welcomes you home

Forget the McMansion. The latest luxury living in Los Angeles is the hotel residence — a condominium with the services of a vacation retreat: room service, valet parking, concierge service, in-room spa treatments. Add to that VIP access to concerts, even someone to walk the dog. Here's a look at some of the selling points.

GARY FRIEDMAN Los Angeles Times

PERSONAL TOUCH: A monogrammed pillow.

Montage Beverly Hills

Price range: $3.85 million to $16.85 million for 1,900 to 5,750 square feet.

Number of units: 20, occupying the top 2½ floors in a wing separate from the hotel.

Perks: Hotel staff that serves as de facto personal assistants who can stock the pantry, pack or unpack luggage, set up office equipment, provide nutritional counseling or plan travel. Personal locker at spa.

Privacy protections: Key card access to private elevators, security systems plus 24-hour patrols, what's described as a staff trained in discretion.

For residents only: House account for incidentals; separate concierge, parking, elevators and entrances.

Best views: downtown Beverly Hills and in the distance, the Hollywood Hills.

LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

STYLE: Name designers worked on W models.

W Hollywood

Price range: Studios in the high $500,000s; penthouses for $5 million-plus.

Number of units: 143 residences on 11 floors in a separate wing.

Perks: Preferential access to hotel restaurant, nightclub and spa.

Privacy protections: Key access to residential wing, 24-hour security, dedicated lobby and elevators.

For residents only: House account; dedicated valet and concierge; rooftop pool, cabanas and fitness center. Car concierge service and business lounge.

Best views: Pantages Theatre, Capitol Records and the Hollywood Hills.

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PRIVATE CABANAS: Residents only, please.

Ritz-Carlton at L.A. Live

Price range: $1.4 million to $10 million for 1,000 to 6,000 square feet.

Number of units: 224, occupying the 27th to 54th floors.

Perks: Priority access to events at developer AEG's events worldwide; upgrades, discounts and other privileges at Ritz-Carlton hotels worldwide.

Privacy protections: Separate entrance, lobby and elevators.

For residents only: Private pool terrace with fitness center and cabanas; separate doorman, concierge and valet parking; a 26th floor lounge with boardroom and media room.

Best views: Vistas of downtown shared only by helicopter pilots.