

# Desert Living

Sky's  
the Limit

100+ WAYS TO SURVIVE  
THE RECESSION IN  
LUXURY

**FRUGAL FEAST**  
A Knockout Dinner  
Party for Under \$50

**SIZE MATTERS**  
Make the Most of Small Spaces

**MEDITATION NATION**  
There's No Place Like Om

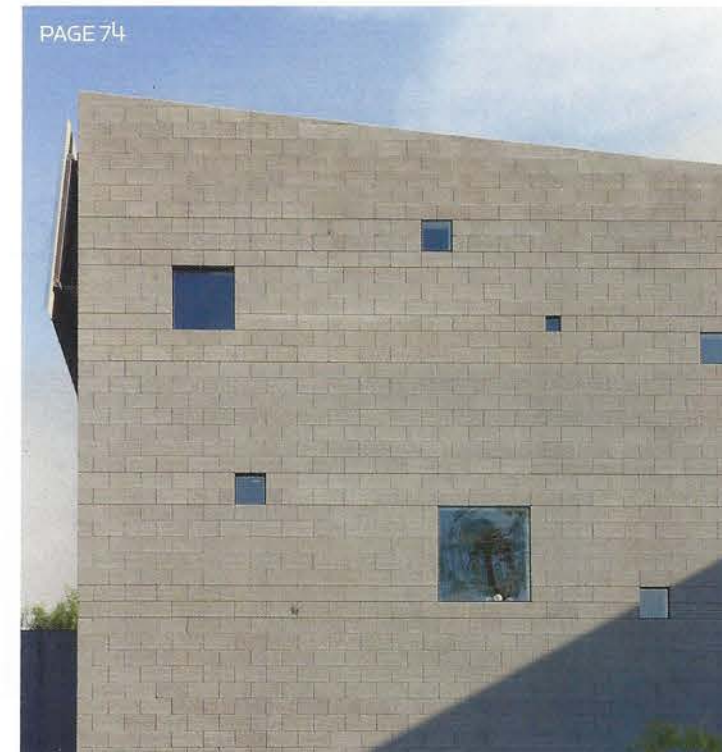
**RECYCLED FASHION**  
Vintage Style for Everyone

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**the economical epicureans** We gave a top chef the ultimate challenge: create a dinner party for 10 people with \$50 by shopping only at Food City. He clocked in with less than 50 cents to spare, and the meal was priceless.

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**the look for less** We hit four designer resale stores for the best vintage fashion and home goods, and found amazing deals with style that rival some of today's best.

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**fainted love** Now that the weather is finally cool, fashion can be. It's time to start layering, adding accessories, and letting style, not temperature, dictate what we wear. And our model is loving every minute of it.

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**picture this** A new condominium development designed by Will Bruder and developed by O' Companies is picture perfect, especially if you're standing in the right spot. DL's editor takes you for a walkthrough with the architect.



(01) MEZZO GESTURES TO THE STREET WITH VISIBLY OPEN FRONT YARDS, PROTRUDING SECOND-LEVEL BALCONIES, AND THE BUILDING'S OVERALL ROOFLINE PITCH, WHICH SEEMS TO "RISE TO THE OCCASION."  
(02) CORRUGATED METAL CATCHES THE DUSK LIGHT, ANIMATING THE EXTERIOR.

# PICTURE THIS

Progressive developer O' Companies and renowned architect Will Bruder team up for a 10-plex in Central Phoenix, and it's picture perfect – especially if you're standing in the right spot.

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED THAT SOME OF THE MODERN MULTI-FAMILY home developments in Phoenix are starting to look the same, we are too. If you think some of them are built with materials no better than your average tract home, you're right. And if you think the prices people have paid for them are totally outrageous, we couldn't agree more. But if you think the new Mezzo community on 12th Street near Osborn is any of the above, you're wrong.

The developer behind the project, Kevin O'Neill, has spent over a dozen years building homes and acquiring land for various companies. But as the first project for his newly formed development enterprise, O' Companies, he knew that meticulous,

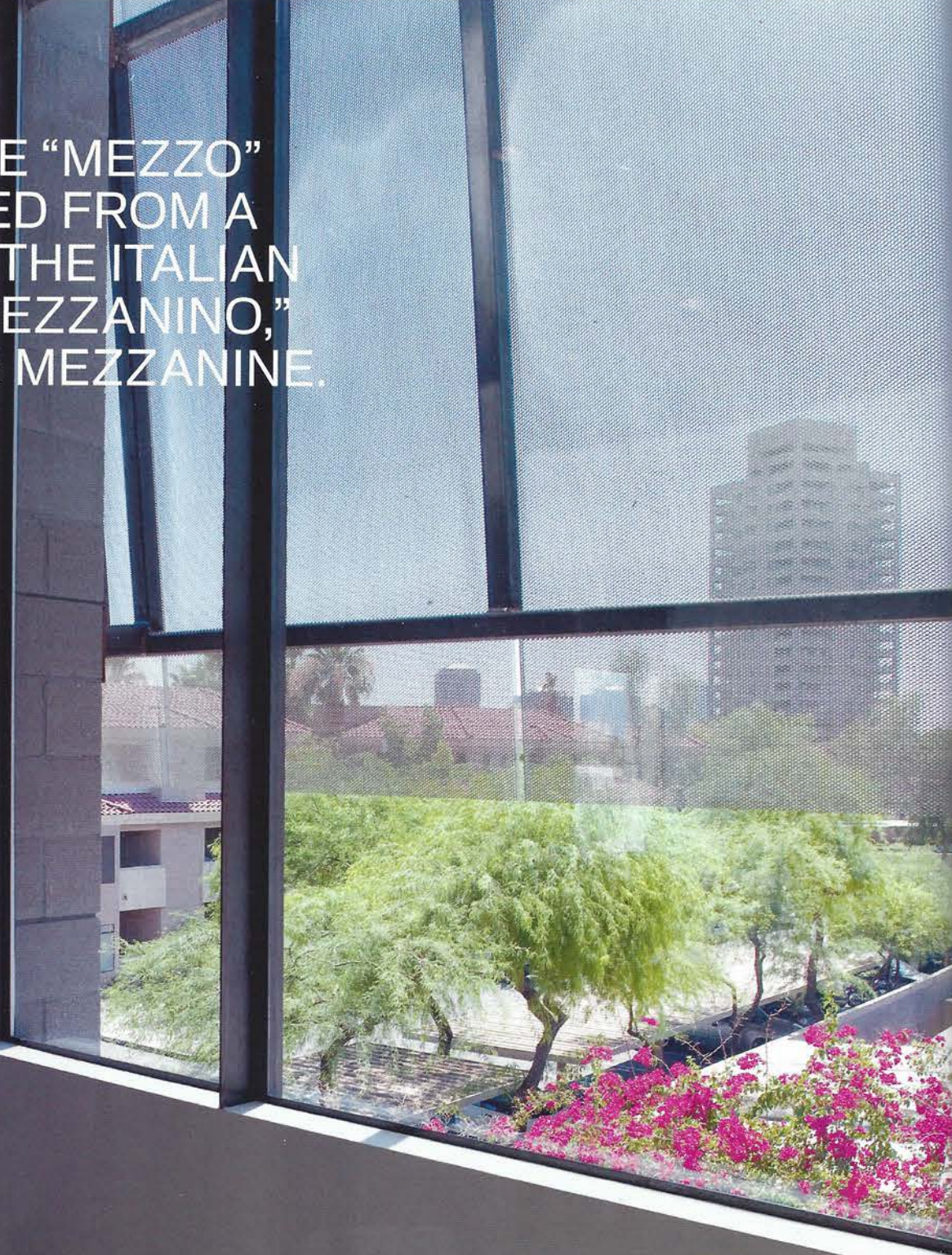
well-articulated architecture had to be the defining characteristic. His corner site, although located a hop-skip from just about everything in Phoenix, is surrounded by waiting-for-rehab homes, so he selected Will Bruder+Partners to devise an inspiring plan. Bruder, who has a knack for making buildings define a place, would not only bring 'starchitect' cache to Mezzo (he's one of the Southwest's most highly published designers), but deliver living spaces inspired more by architectural form than by square footage.

On the day of our tour, Bruder's so excited, he doesn't know where to begin. But interestingly, he kicks off by pointing to the back of the lot, where a new wall of concrete block



03.

THE NAME "MEZZO" IS DERIVED FROM A PLAY ON THE ITALIAN WORD "MEZZANINO," MEANING MEZZANINE.



04.



(03) ONLY THREE STORIES HIGH, THE MASTER BEDROOMS IN MEZZO ENJOY SOME OF THE BEST VIEWS IN PHOENIX. THE EXTERIOR SHADING DEVICE ABOVE MINIMIZES HEAT TRANSFER WITHOUT OBSTRUCTING THE VIEW. (04) THE PROTRUDING KITCHEN WINDOWS CATCH SUNLIGHT AND REFLECT ON THE COMMON GROUND AT CERTAIN TIMES OF DAY. (05) FROM THE MASTER SHOWER, SMALL WINDOWS PROVIDE VIGNETTES OF THE SURROUNDING CITY WHILE RETAINING PRIVACY.

05.



features something traditionally found in the block of 50 years ago—weeping mortar. "It's a detail that references the history of the area," says Bruder. "Originally used to warm up the cold Modernism of the '50s, we thought the texture would provide the perfect backdrop to these sharp, new buildings." He's right. Most would glance over this minor detail, but it touches a note of familiarity that brings a subtle sense of balance from the moment you step onto the property.

Speaking of balance, Mezzo is organized simply—two buildings, five units each, with a common driveway between them. Bruder tries to jazz up this space by calling it an "*auto piazza*," but marketing jive turns out to be unnecessary, especially if you happen to watch how the simple progression of day's light changes the hues between these two buildings. They're clad in a deep blue integral color synthetic stucco that creates an architectural corridor much like a James Turrell piece. Standing here is a pleasure; the ground is covered in stabilized decomposed granite, a material used to reduce the heat island effect.

The justification for Bruder's Italian take on parking is this: he sees this space serving more than automotive needs. He foresees private parties that take place outdoors here (in fact, his own wedding reception was held in the common space at his Loloma 5 development in Scottsdale) and the absence of garage doors helps make a daily connection between neighbors. And back by the wall of weeping mortar, there are shaded custom steel organic herb and vegetable gardens sectioned off for 10 residents. "Every homeowner gets a space, but I'd love to see this become a shared community garden," says Bruder.

The five units facing 12th Street enjoy small, enclosed front yards; while the other five units enjoy mews-like spaces between them. Perspectives were manipulated to provide views between neighbors, but indirectly, so as not to sacrifice privacy.





06.

## RAISING THE VALE

Although Bruder's design for The Vale, a condo development on University Drive in Tempe, was commended by its buyers, he received much criticism for choice of bright green exterior paint. "I did this color and now I'm known as 'the architect who did that green,'" he jokes. Green is used as an exterior accent on Mezzo (opposite page, bottom), albeit this version is toned down and, well, "its less green," says Bruder. This "Sweet Pea Green" color is a microcosm of comparison for the two developments—The Vale is bold, grand, lively; and Mezzo is sophisticated, refined, poetic. "I'm very happy with it," says Bruder.

Indeed, although natural light finds its way into every room, Bruder says, "It's not about the windows at Mezzo; it's about apertures that give you the power to see the world in a new way. It's about changing perspectives, changing colors, and changing landscapes." From outside, small square windows punched through the block seem randomly placed, but from within, they provide camera obscura-like scenes, honing in on things like a single, towering palm tree, the tip of Camelback Mountain, or a picturesque vista.

Because of Bruder's strong relationship with the general contractor, Construction Zone and O'Neill's unwavering dedication to Mezzo's perfection, they were able to design and build in a non-

traditional way. "We essentially used the first unit as a prototype and tweaked it as we went," says O'Neill. "Once it met all of our expectations, we replicated that design nine times." However, to avoid a cookie-cutter scenario, each unit, which measures about 1,525 square feet, is outfitted with different combinations of finishes. Floors in the main living spaces (kitchen, dining, living) are either bamboo, black slate, or natural limestone. Kitchen cabinets are sleek and minimal and finished in natural cherry. Countertops are solid white Corian with a half-inch edge.

Even the common details shared by each unit feel custom. The second level of each three-story home enjoys tall 9-foot-4-inch ceilings ("This height is scaled to the square footage, making spaces feel generous but intimate," says Bruder), signature angled window pop-outs above the kitchen sink, and double-height windows that span the length of an entire wall in every bedroom. From bed, nothing but sky can be seen, and to combat the harsh desert sunlight, each bedroom window is shielded by a panel of perforated metal—reducing direct light on the glass, but allowing for full view of the sky above.

There's more than sky outside these windows though—there are powerlines, and lots of them. O'Neill could have buried the wires but Bruder insisted that they would provide context to the design. Believe it or not, he was right—they actually work. (We're just glad he didn't call them a *power line piazza*.) ■

**More: Take a tour of Mezzo, units are priced from \$395,000. 602.803.5369; mezzophx.com**



(06) THIS WALL BETWEEN A STAIRCASE AND THE LIVING ROOM SHOWS THE LEVEL OF THOUGHT THAT WENT INTO EVERY CORNER: THE OVERALL SHAPE MIMICS MEZZO'S EXTERIOR SHAPE, AND BY NOT TOUCHING THE CEILING OR WALL ON LEFT, IT APPEARS TO HOVER IN THE SPACE. (07) THE MODEL UNIT WAS FURNISHED BY HAUS MODERN LIVING AND FEATURES A KITCHEN TABLE DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT.