

# All Eyes on Indigo

CAPTURING ROB PAULUS'  
MOST RECENT INFILL  
PROJECT IN TUCSON

DURING A RECENT BI-ANNUAL TÊTE À TÊTE with my Italian and Austrian editors, I am struck by the global architectural village in which we all live. Since many of my international editors subscribe to *Desert Living*, one of the first questions I field should have come as no surprise: "*Quando e' il prossimo progetto dell'architetto Rob Paulus?*" ("When is architect Rob Paulus' next project?") my Milan editor, Paola, asks over cappuccino.

In Vienna at Café Prückel, another editor, Andrea, broaches the subject but here the theme is *apfelstrudel*. Since Barrio Metalico in 2004—Rob's first foray as an architect/developer—his simple, modern hand and easy industrial/energy-efficient architecture has gained quite the following across the pond. So, during this warm December day in Tucson, while I am photographing the architect's newest development, the pressure is not *poco* knowing that before I click the first image, magazines from Milan to Singapore are already queuing up to publish indigoMODERN lofts.

This interest is over an 11-unit, first half of a two-phased campaign that will see an additional 11 units mirrored, on axis, across East 3rd Street between two boulevards, Richey and Dodge. Each residence is a cohesive 1,800 square feet of open and sustainable live/work and family space—all rolled into one.

The units are punctuated with light and offer private, cantilevered balconies with unimpeded, dramatic views of the Catalina Mountains. Each space is a highly insulated enclosure, skinned with durable and recyclable materials such as Hardiplank + Steelscape Vintage III pre-aged galvanized metal sheathing and efficient glazing. They operate with 51 percent more energy efficiency than the national average home, and mechanical systems have qualified each owner for a \$2,000 federal tax incentive. Should an



## >>> home

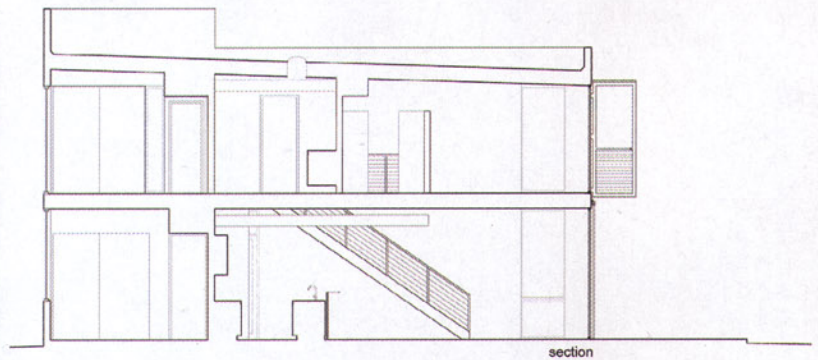
owner decide to take another step towards sustainability, Paulus pre-wired the entire development for photo-voltaic power and pre-plumbed for solar water heat.

IndigoMODERN is organized along a north-south, 180-foot "spine" that serves as access from the gated-off street parking to the units and community swimming pool in the more secluded rear of the site. The layout creates a type of row-housing of separate, detached units whose towering walls provide shade and privacy from next-door neighbors.

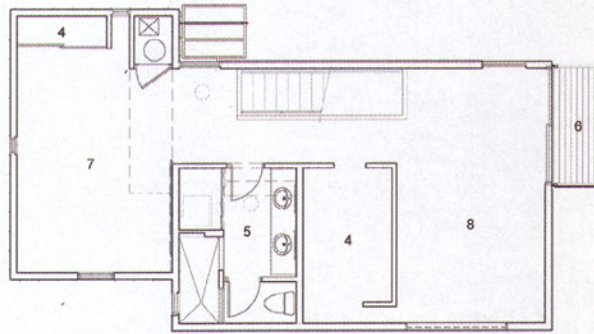
There's a 13-foot-wide central walk created by the 25-foot-tall structures that resembles a dramatic Salk Institute-like canyon. It's a simple yet powerful statement of architectural Modernism not usually found at a residential scale. The corridor, with its constantly changing shades and shadows, acts like a giant sundial, tracking the sun relative to its north-south longitude. And because good architecture can also be fun, the terminus point for the walkway



The Salk Institute-like canyon is a simple yet powerful statement of architectural Modernism that terminates with a giant jet engine culled from Tucson's aircraft boneyard.

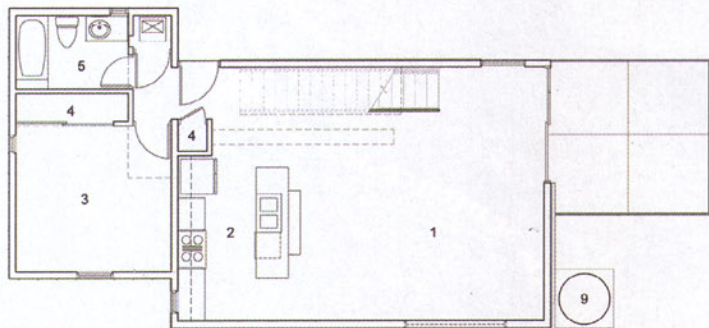


section



second floor plan

- 1 living
- 2 kitchen
- 3 bedroom
- 4 closet
- 5 bath
- 6 balcony
- 7 flex room
- 8 master bedroom
- 9 rain water catchment



first floor plan

is a jet engine cowling straight from Tucson's aircraft boneyard. The eight-foot diameter drum becomes the perfect foil for the long shadows of the late afternoon's amber light.

"We love how Paulus creates a community which draws together like-minded and ecology-conscious people," says indigo homeowner Karin Shipman, after returning from recent volunteer work in Africa. Karin and her husband, Raymond Hoehle, are resident "connoisseurs" of Paulus' architecture—they were one of the first residents here as well as Barrio Metalico.

"IndigoMODERN functions well and has a simplicity that suits our lifestyle," she tells me as I set up to photograph her private courtyard. Homeowners can do what they like with this outdoor space, but it should be noted that Paulus worked with Phoenix-based Chris Winters on the landscape architecture program of indigo

as a whole. Shipman, a fine artist and the owner of an international business consulting firm, enjoys the way these smallish spaces "work." "It is a small house with a lot of room in it," she says.

The next residence to photograph is that of Chicago architect John Burcher AIA, IIDA. This weekend, the DeStefano and Partners Design Principal is in the Old Pueblo taking a break from his international projects and escaping the chill of 12-plus inches of Windy City snow. We are using his residence for the twilight money shot. As Burcher stokes the outdoor fireplace, he recounts that he made his indigoMODERN connection while reading *Desert Living*. "I've followed Rob's work for a number of years and admired his ability to create modern 'green' communities," he says.

Burcher appreciates that indigo is an infill project. "Tucson and Phoenix are communities that need to refocus on

the revitalization of their urban core," he says. "This project reinforces the existing fabric of the neighborhood [and] Paulus has been a good advocate for this type of community development in Tucson."

The sun is considerably over the rim when Paulus emerges to ask how things went and fix the crew cappuccinos. "We practice 'responsible density,'" he says, gesturing with his free hand. "We coined that term to define development within an infill neighborhood that pushes unit count beyond the norm, but within the context of great architecture," he continues as we sit in the furnished display unit. "'Responsible density' encourages community because it brings people together," he says as we wrap up.

*Va bene architetto! Arrivederci* until the next cappuccino in another new infill development. ■

**More: [www.indigomodern.com](http://www.indigomodern.com); [www.robpaulus.com](http://www.robpaulus.com)**