

BUILDER'S CHOICE

MERIT

THE PARK HOUSES AT PLAYA VISTA

Playa Vista, Calif.

BARRY BERKUS, PRINCIPAL of B3 Architects, has one word to describe his client, KB Home, on The Park Houses at Playa Vista: brave. With their "contemporary brownstone" aesthetic, the four-story Park Houses use steel, glass, and colorful cement (a bold palette not often seen in production building) to create a high-end, high-density community that reduces sprawl while maintaining the feeling of single-family homes. Units share a common podium that houses garage space and utilities, but the living areas are separated by a six-foot code requirement—enough distance to make them feel like they stand on their own form. Unlike townhouses with common walls, this configuration allows for greater privacy, acoustical separation, and light.

"The nice thing is that we were able to wrap light around each house instead of having a blind wall," Berkus says. "At that high density, that's hard to do." In addition, fourth-floor roof terraces provide outdoor space for entertaining and gardening.

Sustainability also plays a

central role in the design. North-facing windows allow thermal siphoning and ventilation; hard surface floors provide heat gain on chilly nights, and south-facing windows maximize natural sunlight. Cross ventilation through window placement offers natural cooling.—P.C. (see page 138)



Category: Production/Semi-custom, 2,000 to 3,000 square feet; **Entrant/Architect:** B3 Architects/Berkus Design Studio, Santa Barbara, Calif.; **Architect of record:** KTG Group, Irvine, Calif.; **Builder:** Benchmark Contractors, Santa Monica, Calif.; **Developer:** KB Home, Valencia, Calif.; **Land planner:** Derek Fraychineaud, Playa Vista, Calif.; **Landscape architect:** Fong Hart Schneider & Partners, Costa Mesa, Calif.