

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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The recurring allure of mid-century modern architecture

By Paula King



Architect Joseph Esherick designed this mid-century Lafayette home built in 1951.

Photo courtesy of Ashley Battersby

With sweeping hillside views and window walls that showcase outdoor living spaces and lush grounds, Lamorinda's mid-century modern homes fit the indoor and outdoor California lifestyle and are more popular than ever.

"I have been lucky to list many of them in recent years," said Lafayette Realtor Ashley Battersby. "The classic design features of that mid-century movement fit well with how we live today."

On any given weekend in Lamorinda, prospective homebuyers, mostly in their 20s and 30s, are rushing to open houses to admire the current mid-century modern finds on the market. This younger generation strongly appreciates the architecture's unique features such as panoramic views, large outdoor wraparound decks, vaulted ceilings, oversized windows, exposed beamed ceilings, built-in shelving, wood siding, open floor plans, spacious dining rooms and light-filled ambiance.

The push for these homes in the market began about three or four years ago, noted Regina Englehart of Better Homes and Gardens in Orinda and Walnut Creek.

"Most of the clients I see like the look and feel of those properties," Englehart said. "They are interested in the lines of mid-century homes and the high ceilings and windows." She added that the newer architecture is now emulating this style.

Orinda real estate agent Laura Abrams said that these young homebuyers often shop for furniture at IKEA and they love the Eames leather lounge chairs of that time period. From 1945 to the 1980s, the mid-century home movement focused on simplicity in architecture paired with a connection to nature.

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