

## Up Front



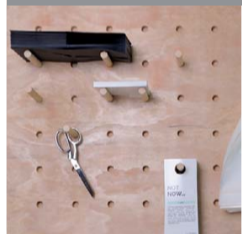
Another burger-and-fries chain checking in to California.  
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## News &amp; Analysis



Why some bike businesses, like Adam Kalamchi's, are riding high while others backpedal.  
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## Exec Office



How to make a shipping center part of your décor.  
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**Folding Up: DNA Clothing on Rose Avenue in Venice, where owners say rents have tripled.**



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## New Wave

Old shops washed out by Venice's tech scene

By **DAINA BETH SOLOMON** Staff Reporter

**T**HE age of \$2 tacos could soon be over on Rose Avenue – a street that symbolizes Venice's transformation from bohemian beach town to sophisticated Silicon Beach hub.

**La Fiesta Brava** has been handed an eviction notice after 23 years serving affordable Mexican fare, and the restaurant slated to take over that space is more likely to serve salt-roasted branzino and grilled oysters.

A few doors away, 23-year-old **DNA Clothing** is closing after its rent tripled. A yoga studio reportedly is scouting out the space.

The forced march of Rose's old-timers is a sign that the street is abandoning its past as a sleepy, rough-hewn road you'd pass through to get from Lincoln Boulevard to the beach. Now, an influx of hip restaurants is attracting new ten-

ants as the rest of Venice gets overcrowded with shopping and dining.

While the seaside neighborhood's turn to the trendy and refined has been years in the making, the recent spillover to Rose from popular shopping drags Abbot Kinney Boulevard and Main Street signals a quicker, bigger metamorphosis taking hold. Tech companies are snatching up property and the neighborhood is filling with young and affluent employees.

There's just one problem: There's little room to grow on narrow streets already packed with homes and businesses. That won't change even as tech companies such as **Google Inc.** and **Yahoo Inc.** add digs in Playa Vista, about three miles away. Venice will still remain a kind of local home base for them, said real estate broker

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## How to make millions flipping in Venice

By **HANNAH MIET** Staff Reporter

**F**EW people understand the changing face of Venice better than property designer **Kim Gordon**.

Soon after she moved there 20 years ago, gang members buried a bag of drugs and guns in her backyard.

Today, she designs and develops luxury homes in the area, selling them for millions to creatives who epitomize the new face of Venice.

Gordon, 50, uses her familiarity with both the new and old Venice to her advantage. She acquires shabby houses for as low as \$850,000 in off-market transactions, paying cash to owners

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**Shored Up: Kim Gordon at 911 Nowita Place, bought for \$1 million and selling for \$4 million.**

## Affordable Fee May Be Costly

**DEVELOPMENT:** Some say housing 'tax' will kill projects.

By **HOWARD FINE** Staff Reporter

The local development community is split over Los Angeles Mayor **Eric Garcetti's** proposed fee on new development to raise money for affordable housing projects.

It's long overdue and welcome news for developer **Isela Gracian**. That's because Gracian heads the **East Los Angeles Community Corp.**, which has built 600 affordable housing units at 12 apartment projects, almost all within the city. The group has at least five more projects in planning stages; without Garcetti's proposed fee, she said some of those projects might never get completed.

But for developer **Shawn Evenhaim**, that same recently announced fee proposal is unwelcome news. Evenhaim is chief executive of **California Home Builders**, a Canoga Park developer of market-

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**Leading Role: Point Media's Richard Marks.**

## Expert Witness Sees Hefty Pay

**LAW:** Richard Marks in high demand in show-biz disputes.

By **CALE OTTENS** Staff Reporter

There's big money to be made as an expert witness, especially in high-profile entertainment disputes.

Beverly Hills attorney **Richard Marks**, for example, once received nearly \$140,000 for just one testimony, according to court records. And because qualified expert witnesses can be hard to find, Marks expects he'll have plenty more opportunities to testify.

Indeed, he might be called to take the stand again soon in a case between two advisers who worked on reality show "Survivor," where one claims the other bilked him out of his \$14 million share of the CBS show's revenue. That case, which was postponed hours before it was scheduled to begin trial in Los Angeles Superior Court

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# Real Estate: Home Designer Moves Into High End

Continued from page 1

she knows from the neighborhood. Then she designs luxury transformations with a focus on natural light and warm interiors.

Then, her business partner and fiancé, **Mauricio Suarez**, helps to renovate them on the cheap, tapping his network of 28 independent contractors. Gordon stages the homes with artsy touches and flips them for as much as \$4 million.

**Kim Gordon Designs** has a 3,000-square-foot house at 911 Nowita Place on the market now – which she acquired for less than \$1 million and is selling for almost \$4 million – and six more on the way in the coming year.

“People say that Venice has lost its artists,” Gordon said, tracing the hem of her black leather vest while lounging in a linen chair near the floor-to-ceiling windows she designed at 911 Nowita. “There are video-game designers, fashion people. Those are artists.”

Buyers of her homes include the likes of **TBWA\Chiat\Day** creative chief **Stephen Butler** and **True Religion Apparel Inc.** alum **Kelly Furano** and her husband, **Keith Eshelman** of **Toms Shoes**.

## Scrappy beginnings

Gordon, a New Jersey native, moved to Venice in the mid-'90s, paying \$700 a month for a two-bedroom apartment in the 1700 block of Washington Way. It was across the street from the Bible Tabernacle church, which fed the homeless in lines that stretched in front of her building. Random men often appeared outside her bathroom window.

“I was dating and you’d say to guys, ‘Pick me up in Venice,’” Gordon said. “They’d look horrified. They’d say, ‘What? Do you live alone?’”

Gordon pieced together artistic odd jobs, including antiquing wood for Eagles drummer **Don Henley** in Malibu. Later, she worked for esteemed designer **Kerry Joyce** and faux-finished a bowling alley that was under a tennis court at a sprawling estate in Beverly Hills.

But after seeing how the other half lived, Gordon would return home to gritty Venice.

In the early 2000s, she bought her first home with her now-ex-husband in the 900 block of Sixth Ave. The block was hot – and not in real estate terms.

“One night, a guy jumped over our fence and buried drugs and guns in the backyard,” Gordon said. “Then (another) gang member knocked on our front door and said he had to go in our backyard.”

**Lee Johnson**, a residential broker at **Sotheby’s International Realty’s** Santa Monica office has sold homes in Venice for 16 years. He remembers those pre-**Snapchat** days, before **Intelligentsia** sold \$5 lattes on **Abbot Kinney Boulevard**.

“When I first started, Venice was the rough-and-tumble side of town, with a higher crime rate,” he said. “Even once **Abbot Kinney** started to become popular in the early 2000s, you felt unsafe parking one block away. Now, I would feel safe parking anywhere in Venice.”

Johnson sold his first home there in 1998 for \$180,000, a property which he said is worth \$1.8 million today. Over the past five years, he has seen home prices rise 60 percent to 70 percent.

“Tech people can afford those prices, so it’s gentrification times 20,” he said.

## Luxury living

In 2009, Gordon separated from her husband and met **Tami Pardee**, chief executive of Venice brokerage **Pardee Properties**, who urged her to buy a house in the 900 block of Nowita.

At that time, she said she also formed a business relationship with a local investor known only as “Uncle Al,” a rich, mysterious figure with a 30-year history of investing in Venice properties. She put down 20 percent in



Cleaning Up: Kim Gordon at 911 Nowita Place, which she bought for under \$1 million and is selling for almost \$4 million.

PHOTOS BY RINGO H.W. CHIU/LABJ



Soft Touch: Home’s standalone bathtub.

**‘I want the Tom Ford gay guys to feel at home here.’**

KIM GORDON,  
Kim Gordon Designs

cash while Uncle Al paid the other 80 percent. They paid \$925,000 for the home.

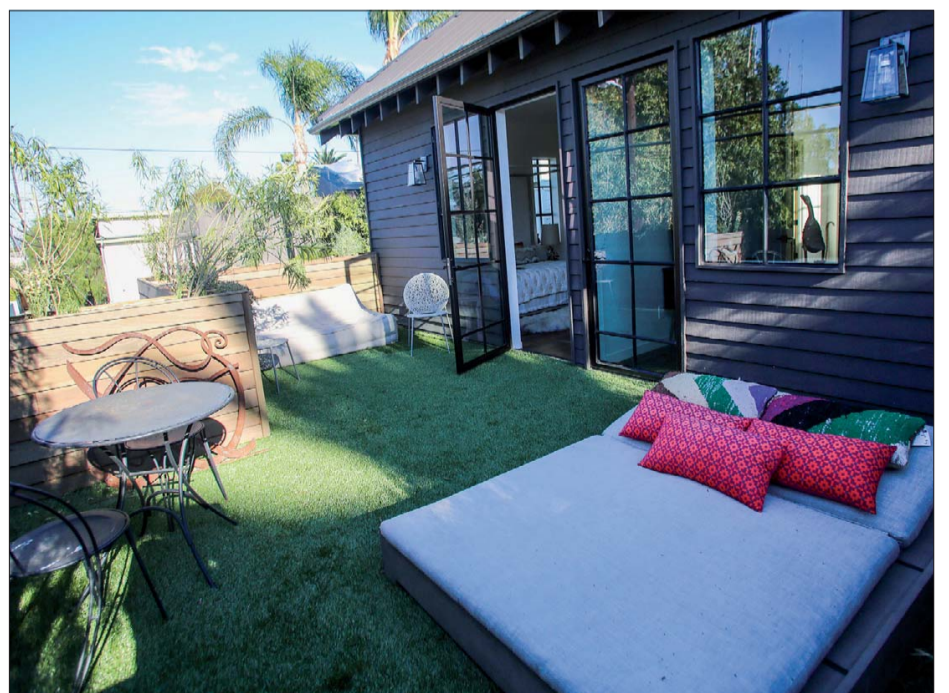
After fixing it up with Suarez, who was then just a hired contractor, Gordon sold it in 2010 for \$3 million.

Pardee has been selling Gordon houses ever since, and Uncle Al has helped her purchase them. She decided to keep working with Suarez, and then proceeded to fall in love with him. Her team had formed.

The signatures of Gordon’s homes are huge steel-framed windows; lighting made to compliment artwork; and plaster walls, hand troweled for texture. Gordon interior designs every piece herself.

Her favorite part of 911 Nowita is not a boardwalk that winds through the garden or a staircase that climbs three floors to a rooftop patio. It’s the master suite’s standalone white bathtub, which is made out of a composite and is soft to the touch.

“I want the Tom Ford gay guys to feel at home here,” she said, running an engagement ring-clad finger along the tub. “I also want the pregnant Pottery Barn moms to feel at home here.”



Entryways: Front door, at top; deck off master bedroom.