

Disney's Pop Century Resort

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The bowling pins are six stories high, a colossal yo-yo pokes above the roofline of a four-story building. Eye-catching, out-sized icons are everywhere, from silhouettes of sock hop dancers and Pac-Man on balcony railings to gargantuan cans of Play Doh next to the Hippy Dippy Pool. Guests at Disney's Pop Century Resort smile and point as they stroll past architectural detail rendered literally on 10 lodge buildings.

"As we bridged to the 21st century, we decided that this new resort would be a celebration of the 20th century's classic years, the 1950s through the 1990s, and tell the story of American pop culture," said Wing Chao, executive vice president of master planning, architecture and design for Walt Disney Imagineering.

Through Walt Disney Imagineering, Disney is creating some of the most memorable resort, retail and dining facilities, corporate offices and public spaces in the world today, in collaboration with the world's leading architects.

"At Imagineering, our goal is always to create visually exciting structures and spaces, each venue distinguished by its own design and character," said Chao.

Disney's Pop Century Resort is designed by Architectonica, the Miami-based architectural firm that created Disney's All-Star Resorts. The 2,880-room value-category resort (rooms start at \$77 a night) is the latest in Disney's "entertainment architecture" — hotels that transport guests to another place and time. But unlike the fantasy of other Disney resorts that allow guests to escape the urban setting and go to places they fantasize about, Disney's Pop Century Resort immerses guests in warm and fuzzy nostalgia, setting the stage for guests to tell their own stories of another place, another time.

The idea is to showcase familiar toys, fads and catch phrases that anybody might have experienced during the last 50 years — represented by icons that bridge generations. From a 40-foot-tall jukebox to bulky eight-track tapes (rendered 35 feet tall), there's a story to share.

"Grandparents and parents can tell their kids about these things," said Chao. "Emotions are evoked by the stories behind the icons . . . it's about bringing back memories."

The site plan is in sequence of the decades, a seamless flow from one to the next, with courtyards and building clusters that create a sense of community and reduce the scale. Intense colors are a reflection of each decade, with a swirl of tie-dyed colors for the 1960s, for instance, and the splashy primary colors of the 1980s with a massive Rubik's Cube — 41 feet high, compared to a real one that is four inches at its tallest point. The '90s are a bit more subtle, with cellular phones and a giant laptop computer with a 28-foot-wide screen on the lodge building.

"Just as a story line is essential to a movie, an architectural story line sets up a design sequence for a building, where one 'scene' must flow into the next to carry the theme throughout the entire space," said Chao. "This story line, combined with our consummate attention to detail, provides for consistent theming, which is what distinguishes a Disney structure and creates a 'wow' experience for our guests."

The whimsical story continues inside the commercial buildings and guestrooms. Across from the front desk is "The Wall," with memorabilia from flea markets, yard sales, eBay and antiques shops that spans five decades. The 640-seat food court, called Everything Pop, incorporates the resort's 7,000-square-foot gift shop and bar. Just outside the

doors, Hippy Dippy Pool is one of three, along with Bowling Pin Pool (designed to look a pin and bowling alley) and Computer Pool for a nod to '90s high tech.

"Pop culture truly is an all-American invention," said Chao. "We influenced the world, and this is a celebration of the whole idea of American innovation and invention."

Key Icons

1950's Lodge Buildings (3 Total):

Center Icons:

- Jukebox
 - Lady from "Lady & the Tramp"
 - The Tramp from "Lady & the Tramp"
 - Stairwell Icon:
 - Bowling Pin
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1960's Lodge Buildings (2 Total)

Center Icons:

- Play-Doh
 - Baloo & Mowgli from "The Jungle Book"
 - Stairwell Icon:
 - Duncan Yo-yo
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1970's Lodge Buildings (2 Total)

Center Icons:

- Mickey Mouse Phone
 - Big Wheel
 - Stairwell Icon:
 - 8-Track Tape
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1980's Lodge Buildings (2 Total)

Center Icons:

- Roger Rabbit
 - Sony Walkman
 - Stairwell Icon:
 - Rubik's Cube
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1990's Lodge Building (1 Total)

Center Icon:

- Laptop Computer
- Stairwell Icon:
- Cellular Phone

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