

PMNetwork®

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Rendering of the proposed olive tree grove at the Miralon agrihood in Palm Springs, California, USA

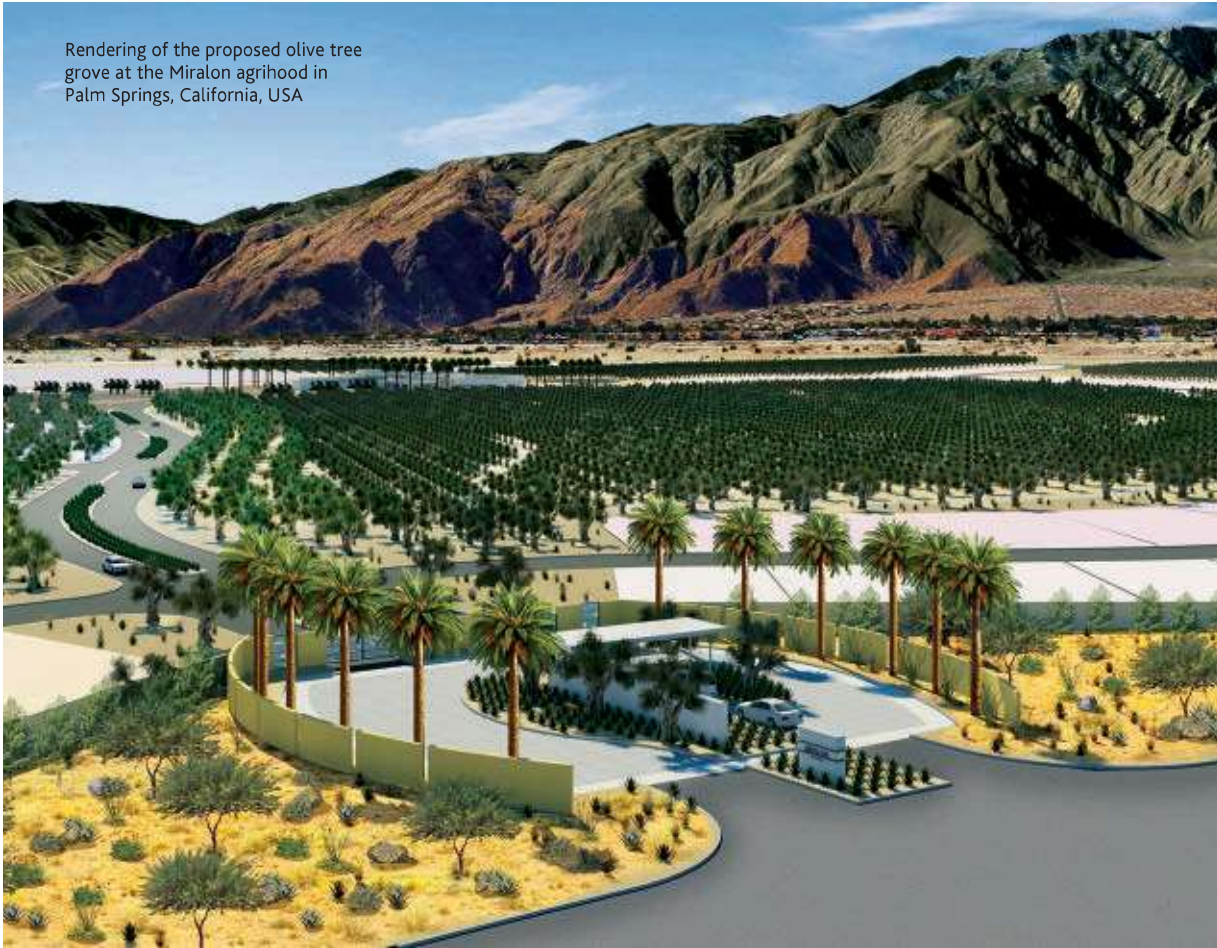


IMAGE COURTESY OF FREEHOLD COMMUNITIES

demonstrations, a yoga studio, two swimming pools and a spa.

These agrihoods come with a special set of challenges that can go beyond a traditional housing developer's purview. When Freehold Communities leaders settled on building a communal olive grove, they consulted a local farming group for guidance and contracted a nearby olive producer to help with harvesting.

Commune Ground

With more people prioritizing sustainability and healthy living, real estate developers are rushing to build neighborhoods around a new amenity—a working farm.

Known as agrihoods, these projects include both housing and land set aside for growing produce. While the idea has been around for over a decade, the latest iterations are meshing bucolic living with technology and luxury.

ReGen Villages in Almere, the Netherlands is a 60-acre (24-hectare), 203-home project, with structures expected to be completed later this year. Designed to be nearly self-sufficient by storing water and energy, growing food and processing much of its own waste, the neighborhood will also use internet of things technology to track consumption of food and energy, which can ultimately bring down homeowners' fees. Freehold Communities broke ground on the 1,150-home Miralon agrihood in Palm Springs, California, USA last year. When finished, it will include a 10,000-square-foot (929-square-meter) facility that will host cooking

“There are logistical implications: You’ve got equipment you need to store, personnel you need to employ,” says Bradley Shuckhart, California division president, Freehold Communities, Palm Springs. He said the team settled on olives because they won’t overburden the water supply in the drought-prone area, are relatively easily to maintain and have a marketable appeal.

But not everyone is enamored with the new model. The project team at Integral Communities has faced vigorous opposition from local residents concerning its proposed 177-acre (72-hectare) North River Farms project in Oceanside, California, USA. Thirty percent of the property is slated for farming, community gardens and recreational activities, and the project plan has scaled back from 985 houses to a maximum of 725 units. Yet at a public community meeting last year, nearby stakeholders raised concerns about everything from the strain the finished project would place on local utilities to safety around wildfires.

—Ambreen Ali



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—Bradley Shuckhart, Freehold Communities, Palm Springs, California, USA