

# Welcome to the Club

**Mike Meldman** is the new guy in town—and *that* is a discovery worth making. BY IRENA MEDAVOY

**WHEN THE SUBJECT OF MEGA REAL ESTATE MOGULS COMES UP**, a few names instantly spring to mind: Donald Trump, Steve Wynn, Mike Meldman....

Mike Meldman?

At age 46, Meldman—the CEO and chair of Discovery Land Company and one of the country's preeminent private golf-community developers—is relocating his headquarters to Los Angeles from San Francisco, making him the new power player in town. And all



Mike Meldman—real estate heavyweight.

around the city you can already spot A-list celebs and industry big shots sporting merchandise from Discovery's exclusive clubs: the ever-cool Jerry Weintraub wearing a Kukio T-shirt; director Jimmy Burrows in a Hideaway cap; even Sylvester Stallone and Jennifer Flavin in Iron Horse sweatshirts and

Madison Club baseball caps.

"Before I was invited to the Hideaway and the Madison Club, I thought I'd seen some of the finest golf courses in the world," says Sly. "But I was taken aback by the astute attention to detail that Mike Meldman shows in these two fantastic courses."

Kukio has its influential fans as well. "Kukio is one of those rare places in this world that combines breathtaking beauty with pure relaxation," says Fred Westheimer, CEO of Lone Star Film Group, who recently returned from a trip there. "It's in the most elegant and laid-back setting, where you're always met with smiles from the nicest people who only want to make you feel wonderful. I love it, love the golf, the food, and the only sad thing is having to leave."

Meldman, who's smart, good-looking, and athletic, is also the father of two boys, Hunter, 17, and Will, 15. (Oh, and he's single—so our hometown just got lucky in more ways than one.)

Recently my husband, Mike, and I flew up to visit Iron Horse, Discovery's community in Whitefish, Montana, to do a little research and ask Meldman a few questions.

**LOS ANGELES CONFIDENTIAL:** Why are you moving your corporate headquarters to Los Angeles?

**MIKE MELDMAN:** My kids are going to school in Santa Barbara, so it makes it easier for me to be there for them. That was my first consideration. It's also a more convenient base from which to travel for projects that are now much more LA-driven.

**LAC:** Can you tell us about a few of your projects?

**MM:** El Dorado, in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, has a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course that's one of his best. By privatizing the course and having him redesign it, we're able to offer the most spectacular beachfront homesites available anywhere in Mexico, along with a beautiful golf and beach club. Only an hour and 20 minutes by plane from LA, Cabo is the new Riviera.

Kukio is located on 670 acres on the Kohala coast of the Big Island of Hawaii. Iron Horse is a golf and mountain club with a club-

house styled after the great lodges in Glacier National Park. And the Hideaway and the Madison Club are in La Quinta, California. There is also Baker's Bay Golf and Ocean Club, located on a beautiful island in the Bahamas, where there will be a private marina to accommodate mega-yachts 300 to 400 feet in size.

Each project will offer 5-star resort amenities in a private community with all the signa-

**The club...will be one of the best places to live anywhere in the world.**

ture Discovery services, which is the basis of all of my projects.

**LAC:** Can you explain how your signature Outdoor Pursuits program started?

**MM:** I've been a single dad most of my sons' lives, and I wanted to find a place where I could take them and do things they'd enjoy doing with me. The "recreational concierge" concept evolved into our Outdoor Pursuits program. At Kukio they learned to scuba dive and have become great surfers. At Iron Horse they learned to fly-fish and conquered Whitefish Lake as expert wakeboarders. They love the different year-round activities, and I love having them with me. I felt other families would feel the same way, and began offering the same services in all of my clubs.

**LAC:** What will the Madison Club be like when it's completed?

**MM:** Tom Fazio is doing the golf course, and we're moving more than five million cubic yards of dirt. We've been buying mature trees for years, so by the time everyone's dream home has been completed, they'll be in an environment with mature landscaping. The club will be by invitation only, very exclusive, and will be one of the best places to live anywhere in the world. \*

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