

PeaceMaker

A.D. Makepeace CEO balances company expansion with community

BY DONNA SCAGLIONE

There is a quiet sense of purpose about Michael Hogan when he speaks. His words come slowly and deliberately as he explains the mission of A.D. Makepeace Company, its future business plans, and his role in all of it.

"...it's all about the land, and you don't assemble almost 13,000 acres over 150 years without respect for it."

You get the sense that the Makepeace president and CEO truly believes in the 150-year-old company's so-called "smart-growth" ideas for some of the 13,000 acres it owns in six Southeastern Massachusetts towns – much of it in Plymouth, Wareham and Carver. He believes that real estate development and agriculture can successfully co-exist with conservation efforts, and that the company can work in sync with local officials and business people.

"At the end of the day it's all about the land, and you don't assemble almost 13,000 acres over 150 years without respect for it," he says.

Perhaps it's his early training to be a Catholic priest, a plan he abandoned years ago, that gives him this clarity of direction and ideals. Or the four years he served as mayor of Marlborough, his hometown. Or the eight years he was president of MassDevelopment, a quasi-public economic development agency.

Regardless of where his ideas and

grounding are rooted, he is most animated when he is digging into the details of a company project, like the large-scale mixed-use "village" proposed for 1,320 acres in Plymouth, just off exit three on Route 3 near the Agawam River. The site borders Myles Standish Forest, and the plan combines single-family homes, town houses and apartments, with commercial and office space, trail systems, and active cranberry bogs. Osprey nests, bluebird boxes and herring ladders are also part of the plan, and 385 of the 1,320 acres will be developed, leaving the rest as open space.

"The project's goal is to create a developmental footprint that optimizes the use of land, integrates the active cranberry operation and creates a mix of work and play for residents while preserving the natural environment," he says.

It's a plan that Hogan says won't "look like everything else that has been done," won't look anything like typical suburbia.

"And if that's what the company was interested in doing, I wouldn't have taken the job."

The concept for the Plymouth proposal is an idea that has been coming to fruition in several smaller-scale residential communities in Makepeace cranberry country in Carver and Wareham. One of them, known as the Residences on Tihonet Pond in Wareham, includes 17 homes on half-acre lots that are within walking distance of the Tihonet Village Market, which offers locally grown produce. The proposed homes on Tihonet are part of a larger village concept for this area that Makepeace



Michael Hogan

hopes will feature condominiums, apartments, commercial buildings, and common land set aside for trails and parks. Makepeace buildings dotted this area in the 1800s, and the company's headquarters is located there today.

Hogan took the company's helm in 2004 as the first CEO who was not a member of the Makepeace family. He arrived politically savvy, having headed the Massachusetts Office of Business Development under former Governor William Weld. And at MassDevelopment, he oversaw the redevelopment of large-scale projects, like the conversion of the 4,400-acre former military base at Fort Devens, home today to 80 companies with 4,200 workers, and the future home of a Bristol-Myers Squibb manufacturing plant.

Such experience primed him for his responsibilities at Makepeace, he says, which are multi-faceted.

"My role here is running a complicated holding company... with the challenge of trying to figure out the optimal use for the land-holdings

Wareham

needs.

and get a return for our shareholders,” he says.

A.D. Makepeace, founded in 1854, is the world’s largest cranberry grower, producing about 250,000 of the roughly 6.6 million barrels grown a year in the United States and one million grown in Canada. (Most of the world’s cranberries are cultivated in just five states and two Canadian provinces.) In addition to cranberry production and real estate development, the company runs sand and gravel operations. While Hogan is quick to note that Makepeace has a history of diversification that dates back to founder Abel D. Makepeace, the crash of the cranberry industry in the late 1990s made the need for more diversification particularly acute.

As the company has focused on real estate development in recent years, perhaps the one experience that Hogan had during his prior working life that best serves him now was being mayor of Marlborough, a post he describes as “the best job I ever had. It was a ball. It’s a very real, almost emotional thing that you don’t get a kick out of at many jobs.”

It wasn’t just that he could make things happen, like the construction of a new park where he plays with his three children, but dealing with the various constituencies and needs of people in town challenged and invigorated him. And the experience certainly prepped him for his work with local officials and residents in Southeastern Massachusetts, especially those who have been less than receptive to Makepeace projects.

He understands that there are people who are going to be leery of

Makepeace right off the bat simply because of the size of its landholdings – A.D. Makepeace is the largest private property owner in Eastern Massachusetts. And each community has its own set of needs and different experiences in dealing with development. Also, one community might have a clear identity already, like Plymouth, which Hogan perceives as a job center and commuting town, with its proximity to Boston. But a town like Wareham is suffering from growing pains as it determines how it should deal with new development. So Hogan has a lot to consider in working with each town.

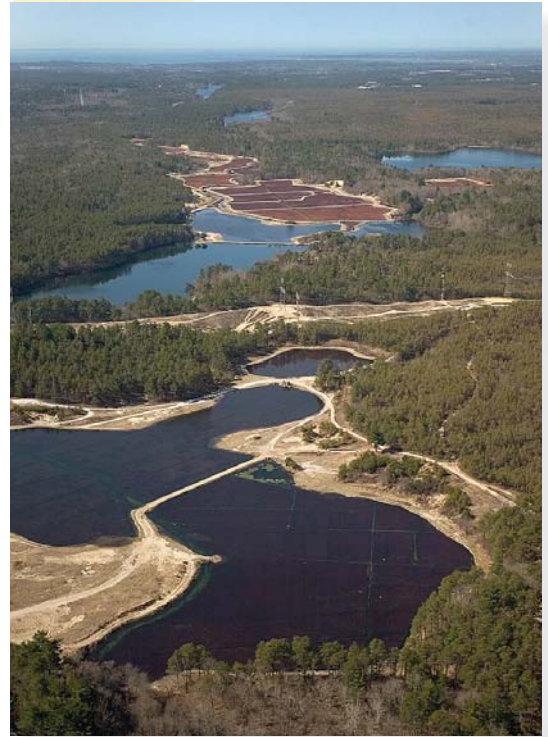
“I’ve sat at their side of the table. I understand the financial pressures. I’ve dealt with them in my past life... You have to understand their processes,” he says of town officials, “and have them be comfortable with picking up the phone and our being responsive – everyone on the staff being responsive.”

This will be particularly important as the company continues to try and diversify even more. On its drawing board are ideas for information technology, as well as plans to try and develop alternative energy sources, like hydroelectric, wind power, and geothermal on its properties.

“Renewable energy is a good fit with our whole inspired-by-nature motto,” Hogan says.

For more information, go to www.admakepeace.com. ■

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Proposed site of the Agawam River “Village.”

The Agawam Project

The overall project is on a 1,320-acre site, but development will occur on 385 acres within the parcel. The balance of the property, or some 900 acres, including active cranberry bogs, will be permanently preserved as open space. The site is located along the Agawam River in South Plymouth, and the open space, which may include an Audubon Society sanctuary, will be appealing to potential homebuyers and an asset to the community as a whole.

While the project is still in the conceptual stage, a building program which includes approximately 160 rental apartments, approximately 430 single family homes, approximately 395 townhouse or multi-family units, and up to 90,000 square feet of commercial space is being contemplated.

The first phase of the project consists of 65 single-family home lots of about a half acre in size.

Permitting is expected to continue over the next year to 18 months, and the full buildout of the project, which should begin next year, will likely take place over the course of a decade.

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