

THE GARDENERS OF LASTING LEGACIES

In life, each person can take one of two attitudes: to build or to plant. The builders might take years over their tasks, but one day they finish what they're doing. When the building is over, the builder finds they are hemmed in by their own walls. Life loses its meaning when the building stops.

Then there are those who plant. They endure storms and all the many vicissitudes of the seasons, and they rarely rest. But, unlike a building, a garden never stops growing. And while it requires the gardener's constant attention, it also allows for the gardeners' life to be a great adventure.

Gardeners always recognize one another, because they know that in the history of each plant lies the growth of the whole world.

The Sierra foothills are home to a myriad of gardeners. We sat down for an in-depth interview with them to get an understanding of how they view the world. In each, you will find fascinating stories of how these men and women have chosen life journeys that take risk, assert power, nurture others, bring joy and serve humankind in ways that will not be forgotten for many years to come.



Tony Mansour: The man with both inspiration and innovation to dramatically change a community

{ VISIONARIES }

Vision is a rare gift in business. It is an act of inspiration, often a gut instinct about the future, which exposes business opportunities. The very best business leaders are able to combine vision and strategy, weaving them together to create successful and enduring enterprises.

Tony Mansour is a just such a visionary. He is the builder of a new

dawn, working with imagination, insight, and boldness. He presents a challenge that calls forth the best in people and brings them together around a shared sense of purpose. He works with the power of intention. He keeps his eyes on the horizon, not just on the near at hand.

In 1980, when Tony Mansour purchased 8,000 acres of rolling

Sierra Foothill land, few would have predicted the impact his vision and development would have on the area. “The vision, Mansour noted, came after the opportunity”. “I bought the land and worked closely with the Urban Land Institute to formulate a plan that would guide the growth of El Dorado Hills into the future”. “I realized that I needed to step up to the plate and implement my dream. I was the trendsetter. I was at the forefront of creating a lifestyle community.”

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Mansour continued, “I wanted to create a better place to live; with better schools, parks, roads and businesses. I wanted a vested plan in perpetuity- a plan that could not change- so that this area might be enjoyed by the many people who came to live here.” In 1989, Tony Mansour negotiated the sale of the residential portions of his plan, for a record 65 million dollars, to a group of prominent Sacramento developers and business professionals. This development, known as Serrano El Dorado, demonstrates his ability to foresee and project the prosperous future of our area.

The creative spirit of Tony Mansour shone through after the sale of the residential plan when he set out to create and develop the commercial area, the El Dorado Hills Town Center. Together with his son Louis Mansour, the men have become lifestyle center innovators. Louis conceives the design concept in his head before it ever is seen by an architect or construction team. “Many of my designs are drawn on napkins or scratch paper,” he says. “I have conceptualized and created an entire European village in my mind in the designing of Town Center.” Part Picasso, part engineer, Louis Mansour adds, “I want everything to feel different. Every step you take, you should see, feel and smell something different. I want you to experience this place. My goal is to have people walk through the village and enjoy the walk. We are creating a downtown here, not a shopping center.”

Literally every building has a story imagined behind it. For example, the Town Center clock tower was once a Church that was bombed during the war and later rebuilt. If you look closely at the architecture, you can actually see the change in the plaster and build that is indicative of this story. The closer you look at all of the buildings at Town Center, the more you will see Louis’ concepts and creativity. “The downtown actually looks like it has been here hundreds of years”, Louis points out. “It is how we wanted it to feel and to look. Nothing is lost in detail”. Louis even worked with local Fish and Game authorities to move the creek over and allow the beautiful water features to be at the forefront of enjoyment. “We always stay hands-on in our vision,” says Tony

Mansour. “That is what makes us interesting; the little details are what makes people enjoy it and come back to it.” He adds. It is true that on any given evening, downtown El Dorado Hill’s Town Center Main Street is teeming with people taking a sweet bite out of life. A walk down the street is a sensory delight: aromas waft from cafes, live music filters down the street from bars and restaurants, and lighted trees and lampposts festooned with colorful posters make for an unforgettable and

welcoming street scene. The men only plan on making the downtown even better. “We have incredible plans for the future,” says Louis Mansour.

While Tony Mansour is the father of 3 children, only Louis has worked with him on the El Dorado Hills Town Center. “I came up here in 1996”, says Louis. “He told me I would only be here for 6 months”, he says with a smile. At the age of 14, a young Louis had plotted the 8,000 original acres, identifying

parcels within the area. It is obvious that the fruit did not fall too far from the tree in this familial legacy. “We are a father-son team”, says Tony Mansour. “It is said that the parents are supposed to teach the children in life. But if you really look, you will see that you learn so much from them. Learning from my children is my reward.”

When asked how he feels about the coming of age of Town Center, Tony Mansour says, “Everything is coming out better than expectation.” “Every day we improve and evolve. We are successful because we know the needs of the community, we listen to feedback and we have the ability to change.” There is no doubt that Tony Mansour always sees the bigger picture. He thinks strategically and knows that there is possibility in everything.

Tony Mansour is truly an inspirational business leader. He has blazed new paths and persuaded others to follow. He has challenged and changed concepts and business practices. His very existence encourages others to confront the present and envision the future. Through the strength of his convictions he has profoundly affected the way we live in El Dorado Hills. He believes in following all of his dreams. “If you know what you want, you work hard at getting it. It might come with some turbulence, but you never give up.” He adds, “Not all developers are opportunists that buy land and chop it up. I have created a better place to live for everybody. I am proud of what I have done. At the end of the day, there is passion in everything that I do: in the details and in the implementation. I don’t regret the things I have done here.”



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