



It's not easy being green

Quiet, committed, and capable, Richard R. Erickson is a pioneering developer who has long seen the “big picture.”

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Some pioneers are not flashy, fabulous or ferocious. Some are shy, loyal and steadfast—like builder and developer Richard R. Erickson.

This quiet dedicated man from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan has made an indelible mark on the Traverse City landscape. His stewardship of the land he develops is unsurpassed. He fights for the integrity of the terrain and the reasonable objective of building homes for people—close to work, close to play and, near and dear to his heart, close to nature. His lifetime goal is to house families, one home at a time.

In the 1970's—long before the condo craze had hit the nation—Erickson convinced his wife and friends that condos, cluster housing and low impact infrastructure was needed in this regional market and wanted by residential buyers.

A forester by degree, he bought land, close to town yet rugged—too rugged to farm—yet perfect for cluster townhouse condominiums. Twenty years later it is easy to say: “Oh yes, of course, he built a planned unit development, which works with Mother Nature and respects the terrain. It is always easy to claim simplicity and practicality *after* the fact...” But Richard Erickson was “green” before it was considered “cool” or “politically correct.”

Lovingly, Erickson is sometimes referred to as the original Kermit the Frog: “It’s not easy being green.” And, he did it before developers in the area had figured out green developing and green building techniques. He did “the right things,” he says, because of his internal compass and drive. It just seemed to come naturally.

His flagship development, Port of Old Mission, has evolved slowly. It is nestled into the hillsides of Old Mission Peninsula and utilizes shared driveways and utility runs. It holds acres of vacant land open for animals, birds and people to enjoy. He has fought destruction of the land simply to satisfy egos and rules—most of which are new and seem to hamper creative development solutions.

Erickson has moved trees with tree spades instead of heavy equipment—and

the timber doesn’t go to waste. Trees that are removed have been milled for woodwork and chipped for power plants in our region. He has taught his staff and landscaping contractors to plant indigenous landscaping materials and plants around homes.

Erickson supports local vendors and suppliers while recognizing the regional growth and its effect and their place in the area market. Every detail is considered to help blend homes into Mother Nature’s Grand scheme—right down to the cedar siding with bark colored stain on Port of Old Mission homes, for example, so the buildings blend in from the water.

Are there a few things the company could do better to be even more green? Of course, says Port of Old Mission’s head of sales and coordination Sally Erickson. We are always looking for better ways to do business, she said.

“We’re not Gods,” Erickson pointed out. “However, sometimes God helps us to see how to best respect the natural assets he has provided to us and still provide housing for his people.” And of Erickson, she said: “...Richard has taught us how to follow God’s lead.”

For more information, call Port of Old Mission at (231) 947-0701 or visit online at www.portofoldmission.com