

<b>Code</b>	514054
<b>Subject</b>	Joel Testa
<b>Date</b>	6/23/2008
<b>Interviewer</b>	Andreas Johansson
<b>Special Notes</b>	n/a

minutes:

bkgrnd info - born in akron, family of builders, they started in 1968, 10 year  
 0 younger sister  
 moved to spec houses a lot, most of the time in silver lake, and munroe falls.  
 1 Married for 16 years, 3 year old daughter, lived in akron all his adult life, walsh  
 and minored in japanese. Recruited by his dad sophomore year. Growing up saw  
 2 dad behind desk - he needed a creative outlet. Now he gets to create  
 can't imagine a better job today. COO of Testa companies. Design of  
 3 commercial and realestate.  
 mainly sales position. Spent time developing business processes - to make  
 4 business more systems based. Active in affordable housing, special needs  
 250-300 unit developments, rentals, mixed use developments. Conversions of  
 5 buildings, like a YW in Toledo. Lofts, mixed use, hotels.  
 lots of commercial work - medical office complexes. Cancer center in Barberton  
 6 that they own and lease back to them. In 41 years, this is their busiest year so  
 govt contracts - little public bid work, more clients like housing authority that  
 7 come to them to build a project. Sometimes, group with need they want to  
 Testa then brings all parties together to get stuff done. He loves solving  
 8 problems, and sees himself as such. Systemic business struggles - started as  
 lessen errors, redunancies, brought in computers, etc. expanded company wisely  
 9 this way. Went to 50 employees, now 1500 homes per year in production. Most  
  
 10 core business - testa companies - marketing umbrella. Others...  
 they build in most jobs - also develop, manage, maintain objects. Construction  
 11 piece is usually the constant.  
 loft conversions became popular ten years ago. He wanted green tech, modern  
 12 flexibility. Looked for a home for this project to redo an old building. City  
 bring a manhattan life style to akron. Dense urban / greenscape. Contradiction  
 13 between the two. Towpath, lofts, city.  
 all of this set in eclectic area. If built in middle of dt, might be too aggressive. Due  
 14 to site, could have mixed use facility - condos, shops, etc. metropolitan lifestyle.  
 aggressive plan as compared to vinyl sided housing next doors. Wanted  
 15 connection to rail and downtown. 40 foot grade difference.  
 rail leftovers still there - massive. TIFF financing to pay for staircase, grade  
 16 transition, three story parking. Engineering feat. Ended up being blessing.  
 hopes this is first if many to come. They let others come in and develop the  
 17 inside. A vertical parade of homes. Sell them shells.  
 other builders can show their take on urban building. Gave others opportunity to  
 18 showcase. Show others there is a market.  
 as long as the demand is there, he's for it. Green tech in lofts - reuse,  
 19 development of site, using existing city infrastructure, components used, geo  
 are offered in the building. No voc, low voc paints, etc are offered. 100% energy  
 20 star builder. Sustainable living program incorporated everywhere. Next bldg will  
 greenspace - what's the role? Testa supports the orgs that work with the area's  
 21 resources.  
 park system is a huge resource. Have created own park system that is  
 22 incorporated it into park system. We have a city in the park.  
  
 23 develop responsibly. Passion for redevelopment.

he loves a challenge. Wants to build around existing nature. Sometimes you  
24 have no choice.  
there's beauty and character out there that takes 100s of years to create. One  
25 can't plant a tree and see it become 100. Appreciate what's here.

26 COBURN ST first project with city of Akron. 9 houses.  
you fear what you don't know. New sales are working well. Each development  
27 has a story, esp with people that come back and buy a house where they have  
CASCADE VILLAGE, ELISABETH PARK. Old memories, new homes. Buyers  
28 want old world, familiar living environment. As lives are more hectic - less likely to  
not too much time to enjoy anymore. Wants convenience. Biggest challenge -  
29 communities that don't understand econ development. They don't get what's

30 communities may not understand what they need. National builders?  
Testa don't compete with national builders. Not the same product. But, they know  
31 the market - what works. Nuances in every market.  
giving back to the community. People respect what they do. At the end of the day  
32 - they do selfish work. They build what they like, make it better.  
how to find properties. Used to get maps, now use GIS to look for vacant parcels.  
33 It's about filling a need.

34 work with others - 27 partnerships. Learn to share, and share well.  
can't get the whole pie. Rarely are they the entire project. Partners actually build  
35 the product.  
historical redevelopment. OC BARBER FARM. DIAMOND MATCH, RUBBER  
36 Company Founder.  
farm was hist landmark. Built medical office park there. Datestone 1910. Resued  
37 the old existing bldgs, mimic the architecture, put stone back, created hist tour.  
mixed use facility today as well. Senior living. Pay tribute, redevelop, blend with  
38 others.  
worked with historical society a lot. Does not seek out hist projects, but would do  
39 again.

40 ELISABETH PARK. Reuse. Respected the past. Built a legacy already.  
hopefully daughter will take over. What they built so far is legacy already.  
41 Projects like Northside. It was there to fill a void. RISE OF THE CREATIVE  
attracting and retaining the creative class. Raw commodity of the revolution now.  
42 City has redeveloped itself now, PRUENZA. Now, there are places to live, to  
this kind of product works in Akron. Stigma about Akron today - but it's changing.  
43 Econ development. Future - restaurant development.  
boutique loft hotel - taking both these national as well. This is new - good  
44 challenge. If that takes off, new era for Testa builders. How compared to  
traffic is light, great scale to it... jack of all trades, master of none. If there is  
45 excess of one thing, then problems. There's a charm to Akron. Pleasant, want

46 cle maybe overbuilt for their market.  
you need density - Akron needs to be the restaurant destination... the mass isn't  
47 there now - but that will change. Need to support this type of development.  
create new venues to attract new crowds. Open-air dining for example. New  
48 sights - green valley. Give them a reason to come downtown.

49 education of new development comes with challenges.  
present your facts to people. Look at things from the community's view. There's  
50 an equitable solution to all problems. Take a step back. How to bring people

testa turns down work all the time... takes the projects that are worth doing, not  
51 battling.  
VILLA DE MONT. MEDITERRANEAN VILLAGE. Tuscan villas. Built / designed  
52 community. Never built. Went fearful of the market. Maybe will build in the future.  
overlooks golf course. Maybe will never be built. Maybe just a couple of homes.  
53 Other projects don't sit in planned phase for too long. Park space as a factor?  
creating parks within developments as part of the project. (Justin H tries to break  
54 in to our room!)  
instead of sterile environment, they created trails, etc. people use it today as part  
55 of their day.  
family uses c valley all the time. He uses 7 parks from his house. LIBERTY  
56 COMMONS. Used to manage that area. Projects in the valley? Not planned  
can't have too many that aren't real (projects). Has to focus on what is today, not  
57 what may be... location of park is a challenge from developer point of view.  
no access to highways for people - presents problem for new tenants. But - big  
58 benefit. Has had to give up land for the park... MED VILLAGE.  
had put in roads already, etc. expected to extend the area, but chuch sold their  
59 parcel, and park ended up wrapping around development.  
everybody loves the dev when new - but don't want others to build around them.  
60 So, worked out well - a good balance. Creates a value for people that are there  
CROWN PLAZA. Designed a hotel from what used to be there. Flexibility offers  
61 new opportunities. Testa is open to anything... anything's for sale. What I do  
62 products they leave behind speak for themselves. END OF INTERVIEW.

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