

**SFGate.com****Luxury real estate developer sets out on new path**

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Jim Anthony reached a pinnacle of golf course development when he snared Tiger Woods' first U.S. golf course design. Now the developer, is turning his main focus to another lofty endeavor.

Anthony, the 65-year-old president of The Cliffs Communities Inc., has a grand plan: "Changing the way America thinks about health care."

During a recent interview at one of his luxury developments, Anthony offered few details about exactly how he's going to achieve that. It's sort of the way he started his real estate company 18 years ago with an idea to create high-end residential developments around golf courses.

He wasn't sure how to do that either, he said, but he now has eight communities in the Carolinas with courses built by some of the world's top golfers and designers, including Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player. The Cliffs Communities also has branched out into resorts in Chile and British Columbia to give residents a chance to help save rain forests while they vacation near them.

"I don't know where the line is, and it's a very gray line, as to where you visualize what you want to happen and it happens," said Anthony.

Though the Woods-designed course won't open until 2011, Anthony is already envisioning his next challenge — one that has been taking shape through his communities and charitable works for years. He aims to teach people how to live healthier lives through better diet, exercise and community service.

Anthony himself is a tall, fit man, who dresses mostly in khakis and button-down shirts and rarely wears a tie. He has been healthy all his life, jogging or walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week, along with stretching and breathing exercises. He eats no meat, except fish, and avoids dairy products, favoring raw fruits and vegetables.

His informal style permeates his corporate offices.

"We don't have a whole lot of structure," said Anthony's 29-year-old son, Lucas, who joins a four-person management team to guide the company as his father pursues his new ambition.

"It's good in that people are allowed to bring new ideas to the table and try new things. But it's difficult because some people in our company need to see the strategy and the reasoning behind it.

"While it's up here in his head ... he'll talk in riddles because he's up here and it doesn't come out in a way that people can grasp it."

Among Anthony's lofty ideas is keeping his workers and residents healthy. All of the Cliffs' 400 employees voluntarily participate in a free program to monitor their vital statistics and helps them improve health concerns like cholesterol levels and blood pressure.

Each community offers residents expensive exercise facilities, costing \$25,000 to join and dues of \$250 a month in addition to golf memberships, which cost \$150,000 to join and \$735 a month.

Two developments have onsite doctor's offices, and the doctors share Anthony's ideas about trying to promote healthy lifestyles rather than treating symptoms.

"Right now, hospitals and doctors only make money when you're sick and you can't beat dollar bills," Anthony said. The "dollar bills have to be aligned with people being well."

One program he plans to be involved with is the Free2Play initiative by the Gray Institute, founded by Michigan physical therapist Gary Gray.

The exercise program is being used in some Michigan schools and has been tested in other states. Gray and Anthony hope to debut the program in the Carolinas in the fall.

A program lesson on jumping, for example, teaches kids the movement, throws in a science lesson about gravity and the physics of jumping. Kids also see how bending down before a jump mirrors the act of reaching out to someone less fortunate to help them reach new heights.

Gray recalls meeting Anthony about a year ago, and says, "We immediately, I think, became soul brothers."

"I'm really looking toward him as a mentor ... because when you meet Mr. Anthony, you trust Mr. Anthony and you admire what he's done in the business world," Gray says. "But if you get to hang around him for a while, you truly understand his heart and spirit and you really see a desperate need to want to give back."

The Cliffs Communities has several nonprofit organizations that the company uses to contribute to charitable causes and to help employees and residents give back as well.

Rick Fisher, who is running the company's charitable efforts, said The Cliffs gave away about \$6 million last year to causes ranging from land conservation to providing scholarships for children of U.S. soldiers killed during active service.

Last month, Anthony said he would be stepping away from the company's day-to-day operations. Fisher wondered how hard it will be for Anthony to give up his 18-year passion for real estate.

"I think his retirement date is whatever date we have our funerals," Fisher says, but adds, "The great thing about his retirement is it doubles my work force, from me to two."

Fisher and Anthony are working together on several projects through the foundation, including preserving rain forests near the company's resorts in Chile and British Columbia.

But Anthony's reputation for protecting nature is being challenged by environmental groups in South Carolina.

Brad Wyche, executive director of environmental group Upstate Forever, applauds the work The Cliffs has done outside its communities. At Furman University, for example, there is a model home that showcases environmentally responsible design, materials and building techniques with energy-saving systems.

But Wyche is trying to block the golf course designed by Gary Player at The Cliffs at Mountain Park north of Greenville, S.C., because of the plan to draw irrigation water directly from the North Saluda River and its wastewater disposal.

The Cliffs Communities eliminated its plan to put treated wastewater directly into the North Saluda River after public objections. But Wyche said the development still will have a significant impact on the river, drawing water for golf course irrigation and crisscrossing the river with 16 bridges and nine playovers.

"The bottom line of what they're doing, they're just turning the river into a giant water hazard," Wyche said.

And that, he said, doesn't match up with the claims the company makes about its environmental stewardship.

"What's disturbing is that they are marketing themselves as this great green company with a heightened sensitivity to the environment," Wyche said. "Mr. Anthony himself told me about five years ago that Mountain Park was going to be state-of-the-art, beyond anything we've ever seen in terms of green development and environmental sensitivity.

"If they're going to be out there making these claims, they really need to step up and do it."

The Cliffs Communities did not want to respond directly to claims and allegations made by Upstate Forever because the permits for the golf course are still in the regulatory process.

But The Cliffs has other worries as well — an economic downturn and sagging real estate market.

The national real estate crisis hit just as Anthony was unveiling his biggest and most expensive development — The Cliffs at High Carolina, where lot prices average about \$1 million.

Sales of homes valued at more than \$1 million in the Carolinas were off about 33 percent in the first 10 months of 2008 compared with the same period the previous year, according to MDA DataQuick.

Anthony said his company's sales were off about 20 percent last year, but The Cliffs does not release sales figures.

"You have to invest more in the relationship (now) to develop that trust because of all the uncertainty," Anthony said. "Instead of a one-day tour, you have to do a three-day tour."

Anthony said the difficult financial times means the company has to change the way it does business.

"When all the circumstances change, it's like we all get a new hand," Anthony said. "We got a new deck of cards and whoever can read their cards the fastest, adjust to the new cards, adjust to the marketplace, has a competitive advantage."

To that end, he recently told his marketing staff to ditch the word "luxury."

"Luxury is a word that needs to be gone. It's about value," Anthony said. "The trend right now I think is deeper meaning — family, faith, philanthropic (ventures). In tough times, people turn to deeper meaning."

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