

## ***Brian Holloway: Easing the path for development***

**Sonya Sorich**



*Brian Holloway, president, Holloway Land Co.*

*Adrenaline junkie gets a rush from winning approvals for projects.*

If you think a career in land development and entitlement consulting doesn't scream "adrenaline junkie," you haven't heard Brian Holloway talk about his job training attack dogs for law enforcement and families.

Now president of Holloway Land Co. in Sacramento, Holloway once donned a leather suit while training attack dogs how to bite. He paid his way through graduate school with the job, which he found on a bulletin board.

The brush with attack dogs didn't scar him, literally or figuratively. "It was fun, and it was great exercise," Holloway said.

In his current job — helping developers expedite project plans and approvals — Holloway still channels some techniques from his dog-training days, particularly when trying to calm an aggressive audience. “There’s times when that comes to mind when I have a really angry group in front of me. Don’t make them mad,” Holloway said.

During his more than 30-year career, Holloway has helped get entitlement approvals for projects in Northern California ranging from 5 acres to 4,000 acres. Examples are the master plan that included Serrano and the El Dorado Hills Town Center, plus the Delta Shores Master Plan, Sunrise-Douglas Specific Plan and Sacramento Country Day School Master Plan.

Neighborhood outreach is one part of Holloway’s job. He also works with planning commissions, city councils and boards of supervisors.

As expected, project presentations don’t always go smoothly. What does Holloway do when stakeholders express concerns?

“You treat them respectfully and politely and you listen. Generally if you shut up and start listening, people will respect that and be more cordial,” Holloway said.

“Brian doesn’t make many enemies,” said Fred Katz, a local retail commercial developer who has worked with Holloway in a variety of capacities. “His greatest attribute is his access to all departments of the city of Sacramento and the county, and those are a result of his past performance and relationships with those departments.”

Katz recalls walking door-to-door with Holloway while collecting neighbors’ feedback for an expansion by Sacramento Country Day School. He said Holloway’s patience and strong communication skills are vital in such conversations.

“He’s a very bright guy. He’s a very gregarious guy ... Brian is always able to smile and add a little humor to whatever the situation is,” Katz said.

Before the recession, Holloway worked largely on suburban residential projects. “Then the recession happened and all those clients went away,” he said. Now, he works mainly with infill nonresidential projects and lists retail clients such as Dollar General, 7-Eleven, Kohl’s and Raley’s.

“When the recession started, a lot of grocery stores stopped — and my sense is that they’re back,” Holloway said.

He was project manager for the approval process of Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market's entry into Northern California. Owned by British-based Tesco PLC, the grocer sold many of its stores to Yucaipa Cos. LLC last year. But the sale didn't include the five local stores, which closed instead.

"I think it was a good concept," Holloway said. But "all the decisions were made by people from England, so it never quite jelled."

Although Holloway's job doesn't involve securing leases, he does have a real estate license, as do his parents and many other family members.

Born and raised in Sacramento, Holloway said his birth announcement was formatted to resemble the declaration of a new subdivision. "My dad always said my first word was 'escrow,' not 'mama,'" he joked.

A former president of the Sacramento Association of Realtors, Holloway said he always knew his career would involve real estate. But he was surprised to develop an interest in private-sector planning. Initially, he expected to work in public planning but switched gears based on a city manager's advice.

After holding jobs at Moss Land Co. and El Dorado Hills Investors Ltd., which became The Mansour Co., he started his own company in 1989.

"One of the things that I have found from the get-go is if you treat the client like family and you also treat the outside agency folks the same way, it just brings lots of rewards and it's a whole lot more fun," Holloway said.

One of Holloway's biggest strengths is his ability to simplify and explain very technical issues, said Stephanie Dupzyk, a client of Holloway's for the past seven months. Holloway is helping Dupzyk secure land-use permits for a small horse-riding facility in Fair Oaks.

"Understanding the zoning code is very difficult," Dupzyk said. "He can see the big picture. He never made me feel silly if I asked any questions."

He's also a strong advocate for his clients, she said: "He will fight tooth-and-nail for you."

Holloway's competitive nature isn't confined to the office; he had a stint as a competitive race-car driver before being sidelined by injury in 1997. While his race car sits in his garage, Holloway satisfies his adrenaline cravings by watching car races.

For the past nine years, he's filled a luxury bus with clients and friends for an annual trip to the Sonoma Raceway. The raceway always brings on the desired adrenaline rush. "You roll a ball around a racetrack, I'll go watch it," he said.

**Brian Holloway, p resident, Holloway Land Co.**

**Age:** 64

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in urban geography from California State University San Jose, master's in city and regional planning from Fresno State

**Personal:** Lives in East Sacramento with wife Lisa and children Elizabeth, 14, and Blake, 12

**Biggest professional worry:** "Another recession like the last one."

**Toughest professional decision:** "Quitting my job and starting my own company from scratch."

**Biggest misunderstanding about your job:** That there's an "inside track" to approvals.

**More about his race car:** It's a Mirage.

**Passion for volunteering:** It's a passion Holloway said he inherited from his parents. "If there was an organization that was named after an animal, they were members," he said. Groups Holloway volunteers for include the Midtown Business Association and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency.