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Eastbrook Homes' McGraw Lands On Land-Use Council

Builder Is Excited To Serve On Statewide Committee

By David Czurak

GRAND RAPIDS — Eastbrook Homes Inc. President Mick McGraw is one of just two West Michigan businessmen selected for the 26-member land-use council initiated by Gov. Jennifer Granholm in cooperation with Lansing lawmakers.

James Brooks of Holland is the region's other business representative. Brooks formerly owned the Brooks Beverage Co. and currently chairs the West Michigan Strategic Alliance, a group of public officials and business people dedicated to promoting unified planning in the region.

State Sen. Patricia Birkholz (R-Saugatuck) is also on the council.

McGraw, a homebuilder by trade, has been active in issues related to land use for the past 15 years, including a lengthy stint as an at-large member with the region's planning agency, the Grand Valley Metro Council.

"I hope that we can come up with ideas," said McGraw of the council. "I don't know if they will result in legislation. But if so, that will be beneficial to creating a better landscape in the long run for future generations. So I think there is room for excitement."

His selection came as a surprise, as he didn't apply for the council.

McGraw began getting phone calls telling him he was being considered. He believes that a West Michigan lawmaker nominated him. A pair of phone calls later confirmed his selection.

"I got a phone call from both the governor's office and from (Senator) Ken Sikkema's office asking if I would be will-

ing to do it," he said.

"I was."

McGraw has earned a reputation for being an ecologically responsible builder.

He has served on the environmental committee of the local homebuilders association for a dozen years and has worked closely with members of various environmental groups, agencies and commissions on land-use issues over that period.

"I have found that we really have a fairly close relationship with the environmental groups, and that we are often more aligned with their thoughts than many of the other stakeholders," said McGraw.

"We've developed an understanding of what we're both trying to do. At the end of the day I think those in the development community have a great desire not to use any more land than we have to," he added.

McGraw said he has often asked those in the environmental community for opinions on certain matters concerning developments and, as a result, has created strong ties with some of them.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality recently gave McGraw's firm a water-quality award the agency promoted through its statewide newsletter.

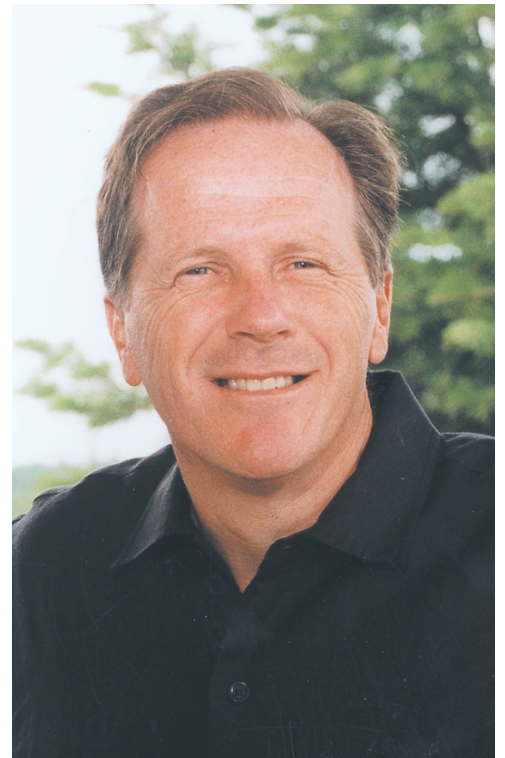
The new land-use council will try to identify trends, causes and consequences of urban sprawl.

He was told that whatever the council comes up with would be reported to the governor and the legislature, but wasn't given a guarantee that the group's findings would result in any legislation.

Eastbrook Homes has built communities in the metro area and along the Lake shore.

Bailey's Grove, Canon Farms, Jonathan Woods, Palmer Hills, Arbor Hills, Ada Moorings and Clements Mill ring Grand Rapids, while Hickory Woods, Windflower Bay, Evergreen, and Forest Park East straddle the state's west coast.

A little more than a month ago East-



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McGraw

brook Homes pledged to give the Forest Hills School District \$16,500 over the next three years.

The district intends to use the gift to buy printers and digital cameras and to expand outdoor learning areas for elementary students.

Former Michigan Gov. William Milliken and past Attorney General Frank Kelley are co-chairing the council, which is expected to meet into the summer.

"I am sure that they are very knowledgeable, and I think they'll be great co-chairs," said McGraw. "And I think, through this group, we will come up with some great ideas."

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