

## **Dos Lagos symbolizing the I.E.'s hope**

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### **By Michael Rappaport**

Ali Sahabi is president of SE Corporation, a privately held, California-based land planning, entitlement and development firm. He is also the managing member and the principal of Temescal Canyon Properties-8, LLC (TCP), the developer of Dos Lagos.

Sahabi has directed a number of development projects across Southern California including industrial, multifamily residential and commercial retail projects. Prior to founding SE Corporation, he served as executive vice president for Vahdani Construction, where he personally negotiated and managed 300 construction projects statewide and led the company's expansion efforts, opening offices in San Francisco and Santa Barbara.

His Dos Lagos project followed Victoria Gardens in bringing high-end retail to the Inland Empire, but Dos Lagos is much more than just a shopping center – it's a mixed-use community that hopes to do for Corona what Victoria Gardens is doing for Rancho Cucamonga.

Sahabi sat down for Six Questions with Business Editor Michael Rappaport this week.

**Question:** Dos Lagos has become a symbolic environmental project for the Inland Empire, hasn't it?

**Answer:** Dos Lagos, in many ways, symbolizes new hope for the region. It is living proof that profit doesn't have to come at the expense of nature.

We took great care and spent a lot of time and money to reclaim the land and re-establish habitat for the native species that once lived there. Today, many of those animals, some of which are endangered, have returned.

It may have cost a little more, but those efforts have brought additional value to the project and enhanced land values in the 15 Freeway Temescal Valley corridor. If it can happen here, it can happen anywhere.

**Q:** Why have you focused on developing this type of sustainable environmentally-oriented communities?

**A:** Sustainability means a balance between the social, economic and environmental needs of a project. Dos Lagos was designed to reflect the culture and history of the land it was built on. The circular walk around the lakes is symbolic of the historic Grand Avenue Circle in Corona. The landscaping around the lakes uses many of the same trees that line Corona's historic streets, and pays tribute to the city's abundant citrus heritage.

The mixed-use aspect of the project enhances the quality of life for the people who live there, by enabling them to live, work and play in their own community. We reclaimed the land and restored natural habitat. And we did all this while maintaining a balance between the needs of nature, the needs of the community and the business need for the development to make a profit.

**Q:** There has been a lot of talk about the Green Valley Initiative. Can you define what its mission is and what it means to the future development of the Inland Empire?

A: The Green Valley Initiative is an economic development plan that will attract green industries to the Inland Empire, elevate the job market with new, high-paying positions, and enhance the overall quality of life for the region.

We believe the Inland Empire, with its proximity to major transportation hubs, its projected growth, land availability, sunshine and educated work force is the ideal place for such an initiative.

There are nearly 100 key community and business leaders, elected officials, environmental groups and representatives of local Native American tribes taking part in the effort.

We invite anyone interested to get involved at [www.greenvalleynow.org](http://www.greenvalleynow.org).

Q: The Inland Empire has traditionally been the “affordable” end of Southern California. What made you decide to bring in high-end retail?

A: At Dos Lagos, we took an unwanted piece of land – an old, abandoned silica mining operation – and turned it into a signature development of regional significance. There is a lot of wealth coming into the Inland Empire from Orange and Los Angeles counties, and a lot is being generated locally, too.

We recognized that the time had come to demonstrate a new way of doing things here. We put value into the land, and it in turn generated bountiful rewards. The high-end retail at the Promenade Shops at Dos Lagos reflects the changing demographic of the Inland Empire. We’re high-end now.

Q: How do you see the future growth of San Bernardino and Riverside counties?

A: There is a lot of talk now about Brownfield developments, projects built on land considered to be unusable because of industrial uses or blight. That’s what we did at Dos Lagos. San Bernardino County could benefit from quality Brownfield or infill development. All it takes is one project to get started, and others will follow.

Q: What’s the one thing that would surprise most people to know about SE Corporation?

A: For those who don’t know us, it would probably be our commitment to the community. Yes, we are a land entitlement and development corporation, but we’re interested in doing more than just lay down streets and put up buildings.

Our goal is to create vibrant communities, and that requires us to build relationships with the people who lived in the area before we ever came along. We talk with them and work with them to develop a plan that everyone can be proud of. Best of all, somewhere in the process, we inevitably become friends.

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