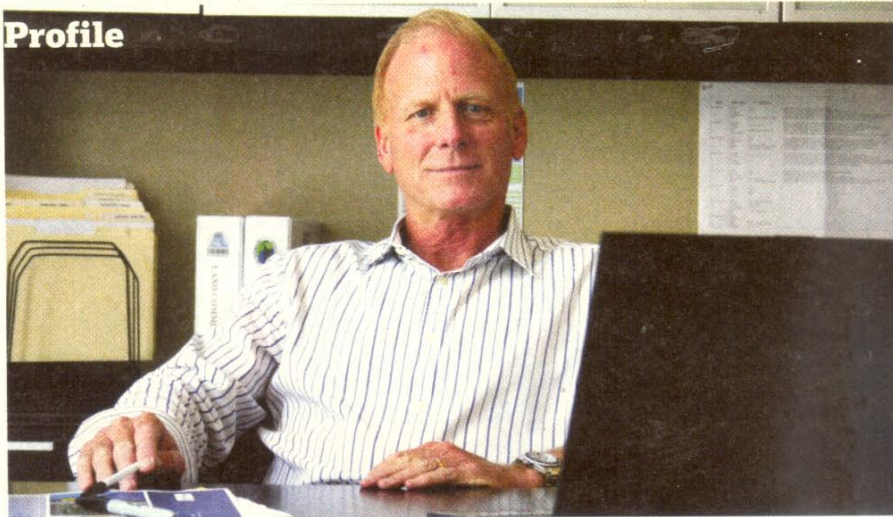


## Profile



## A 'true mark' of success

**Mike Maples** and his partner launched a homebuilding company with a new financial model. **by Jerry Hicks**

**What does a preacher know about selling real estate?** Or building homes?

In the case of Mike Maples, a great deal, as it turns out. The Irvine resident holds a master's degree in divinity and is the co-owner of Trumark Homes, a new division of a land development company that he founded with business partner Gregg Nelson in 1988.

While business is slow for some developers, these two will soon be putting shovels to the ground. Trumark's first project – 39 single-family homes in Upland – is scheduled to be ready for move-ins in the spring. Then comes 68 single-family homes in Lake Forest in the spring of 2011, and 60 single-family homes in Brea in the spring of 2012.

How sure is Maples that these land sites will be springing up real houses? They're all funded by investors.

"So, we know they're going to go," he says.

Maples didn't expect a life in real estate after

graduating from divinity school. He primarily worked as a youth minister, but real estate became a necessary side job during his early ministerial days.

"My wife and I started having babies, and they wanted to eat," he says with a laugh. "Gregg and I quit our jobs, and he and I started our company. And at the same time, we both helped launch a new church."

They expanded to include Trumark Commercial in 1996. The companies did so well, they started Trumark Homes last year. The partners already had an Irvine office and felt that was a good base for the new homebuilding company. With their kids in college – all in Southern California – the Mapleses moved to O.C. to launch the new company.

But can these new homes find buyers? Maples is banking on it: "Our prices are going to be of compelling value to people, even in a constrained market."

**Company name:** Trumark Homes

**Headquarters:** Irvine

**Startup costs:** "We never disclose that. ... But it's never cheap."

**Light-bulb moment:** "When our first project was fully funded in May, that's when we knew we had something. Now, even before building that one, we're fully funded for two more."