



The Jacobs Companies has been a North Shore name for 81 years

Keith Jacobs' family has a long history

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Key Takeaways

- The Jacobs Companies has been building custom homes in Chicago's North Shore for 81 years
- The company prides itself on being a "family company"
- Keith Jacobs says that having the family's name on each home is proof of the passion and dedication



Keith Jacobs

For more than 80 years, The Jacobs Companies have been developing custom homes and communities in [Chicago's North Shore](#).

Keith Jacobs helms the business, following in the footsteps of his father, Marvin, uncle Joe, and his grandfather, Albert S. Jacobs. Having grown up on construction sites, Keith admits that the joy of walking through a completed project is still not lost on him.

Inman spoke with Keith over the phone to talk about values, strengths and weaknesses, and current projects underway for [The Jacobs Companies](#).

What values and traditions did you see early in your career with Jacobs Companies, and how have they evolved over the years?

What our values really are after 81 years, it's very old school to us, it's very family. Our values are really focused on family.



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Being a family business, and building homes for families. So, we treat each home that we build like it's for someone in our family. One of our common sayings here is "welcome to our family." That's really what we believe in that sets us apart from everyone else.

My name is on every building we build.

We're not "ABC builders," or "The Red Lion." We are Jacobs. It's known that it's a Jacobs home and it's advertised that it's a Jacobs home. Those are really the values we stick to. It's just true and tried tradition, and that's how we've evolved over 81 years.

Do you have a childhood memory where you first were able to see this and truly believe in it?

There's great memories of my grandfather, my father and my uncle. I would go to work with my dad as often as I could. I used to love it.



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I would sit in his office and I would look out the window and I would watch the houses being built. I worked with all of the trades for several years, for every trade that goes into the house, and really just – that's what I loved and what I knew!

Just walking through, though, we make it a point to walk through every home that we build.

That was my grandfather's tradition, my father's, my uncle's, and they would take me with. We would walk through and I'd get to see all the different kinds of things that people had chosen, and different styles of homes. It was really like working with an artist. Every product was different, everyone had a personality and everyone really liked what they were getting.

That was my moment: Just walking around with my elders and noticing what building was all about.

What is a weakness you've seen and been able to overcome? What area of your business did you look at and say "This is an area where we can grow?"

We've been very successful in building in the North Shore of Chicago. The downfall of that is we are very successful in the North Shore.

We don't know where to go when it comes to the city of Chicago, some of the suburbs are next to us, and we don't even know where to get a building permit.

We've spent so much time up here recreating a product, whether it's taking an old building down, or a factory down, or a golf course, and converting that into a development. That's our downfall; we are very much in this niche. I call it from Touhy Avenue to Lake Forest, from Lake Michigan to Vernon Hills. That's the niche we stay in.

That sounds like an ideal weakness.

Exactly! I've toyed with the idea, I'm 55 now, but I've toyed with the idea of doing something in a warmer climate during the winter, and every time I go down to Texas and take a look at something, it's a little overwhelming. Like I said, I don't know where to begin there, where I know it in my sleep up here.