

Joe Rentfro interview

Managing Director, Thomas Ranch, Loraloma Club,
Spicewood, Texas, USA

The Rentfro Story

With over 30 years of managing diverse domestic and international projects, I've successfully led business operations for private companies and large-cap publicly traded corporations, with an emphasis on resort and resort community development.

My experience spans leading strategic planning, large-scale developments, business operations, and P&L oversight, partnerships, and marketing programs for successful entities such as Tejon Ranch Company, Abu Dhabi Executive Affairs Authority & Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, The St. Joe Company, Aramark Corporation, and Marriott International.

My passion stems from creating and nurturing highly motivated, initiative-taking management teams able to execute effective business plans and proven proficiency in developing and executing long-term strategies for large-scale landowners.



The Rentfro Journey

I'm a fifth-generation Texan who was first inspired by regional place-making by some of the large master-plans envisioned by companies like Mobil in the mid-to-late 1980s. Looking over a gargantuan topo table in a room that overlooked undeveloped pasture lands at Stone Bridge Ranch near McKinney convinced me to change my major at Texas A&M, inspiring me to want to be a real estate developer that could bring imagined worlds of possibilities to life by transforming special landscapes into special places.

Always grounded in my Texas roots, I have spent the better part of the last three decades working across the country and select parts of the world, leveraging my curiosity, imagination, market planning, and financial feasibility skills to transform special landscapes and unique site locations into special places where memories are made and lives are lived to their fullest.

During the last two decades, I've had the opportunity to work for two publicly traded companies that owned 1.1 million and 270,000 acres, respectively, in Florida and California.

That enabled me to plan at a "regional place-making scale" while delivering transformative communities – as well as develop a variety of destination resorts, golf courses, museums, etc.

Much of which was on a 6K AC island off the tip of downtown Abu Dhabi — UAE Saadiyat Island.



What was the genesis for the property at Loraloma?

When Areté Collective acquired the land that is now Loraloma, it was with a clear vision to create a new kind of Hill Country community rooted in design, stewardship, and long-term value. Spanning more than 1,200 acres of some of the highest hills where the Pedernales River meets Lake Travis, the property offered a rare opportunity to shape something enduring in the path of Austin's continued growth.

As a development firm born out of a design studio, Loraloma was conceived not simply as a development, but as a thoughtfully crafted community that expresses our belief in design-driven placemaking and deep connection to the land.

Describe what Loraloma provides as a property that makes it stand apart?

The land itself is unique; it's "the highest hills where the two rivers meet," with the Pedernales and Lake Travis, right in the path of Austin's high net worth growth path.

Start with special land, add-in visionary thinking and a philosophy entrenched in developing a community that will be enjoyed by future generations by the way we protect, preserve and conserve its most rare land assets – and then live in the details throughout execution and operations.



Given your past involvements with various different developments — what’s the biggest lesson you ‘ve learned and how does Loraloma stand apart from them?

Define the pillars appropriate for your land and development vision.

For me, Loraloma stands apart from other places I’ve helped create because I’m getting to bring the landscape I grew up in to life – and hopefully honor a fair bit of Texas legacy in the way we redefine luxury living here in the Lone Star State.

How much of a search process was carried out before opting to go with David McLay Kidd?

I don’t want to name names, but many golf course architects were considered; however, David stood out and was the perfect fit to design Loraloma Golf Club.

He was the perfect partner because his approach to design and vision was perfectly in sync with Areté’s.



What was the tipping point in ultimately selecting him?

David didn't want to alter the landscape; rather, he wanted to bring the existing landscape and land form to life on 100 acres of zoysia grasses.

Beyond selecting David to design the course, it became a DMK design-build project – and having David and his team as the builders of the course may have been an even better decision than choosing him to design the course!

How many acres is the golf course situated upon?

Approximately 100.

What makes the Austin area so compelling for many people now calling the area home?

Austin and the Hill Country just have a vibe about themselves – which is very rare nowadays.

This region remains authentic and unique, and provides endless experiences singular to this area – many of which are centered on connectivity to the land and the river systems and watersheds that meander across this landscape, as well as lots of offerings with historical roots that live contemporaneously: with food and music as examples.



Customer service is routinely talked about. Define the term and the approach followed at Loraloma.

“Unreasonable Hospitality” — stolen from a Will Guidara book.

If you could change one thing in golf unilaterally – what would it be and why?

From a nostalgia perspective, I do miss walking the course most of the time. I remember the times when growing up and walking 36 holes a day for \$1 at Stevens Park in Dallas, Texas and experiencing the course on foot – instead of via a powered golf cart.

Loraloma was designed to be a very walkable course whereby your round could be enjoyed as a walk through the Hill Country atop limestone bluffs on the edge of the river enjoying long, diverse views across varied landscapes.

Best advice you ever received – what was it and who was it from?

A few come to mind —

“Remember who you are, and where you came from” — from mom and dad.

“Make more mistakes faster — you can’t create special or make a difference without taking risks — just don’t make the same one twice and learn a lesson from each one you make,” Bob Deeley — supervisor at Marriott.

