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Attendance at fall Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference increases from spring numbers

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The Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference in Oct. had 22% more attendees than the Boston event in March. Perhaps this indicates better market conditions to come.

According to a post show survey 12% of attendees expect their restoration/renovation business to "increase dramatically" in the next three years; 31% say it will "increase somewhat," and 36% say it will "remain unchanged."

The mood on the exhibit floor was upbeat with active, engaged attendees looking for new products and ideas from suppliers. The AIA accredited education on the exhibit floor was also popular. Architects could earn up to 6 free CEUs in the classroom there. A total 33% of all attendees earned at least one CEU, 19% earned 11 CEUs or more.

"This was the best Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference we have ever attended," remarked Michael Connor of Connor Homes, who has offices in Middlebury, VT. and Leesburg, VA. "The quality of attendee is very high. We came away with lots of valuable sales leads."

Connor's enthusiasm was shared by most exhibitors who were encouraged by the traditional building activity this audience represents. "There is still plenty of business out there if you know where to look," said an exhibitor. Traditional building business in the institutional segment remains buoyant as evidenced by facilities manager attendees from several universities, museums, churches and municipalities including the U.S. Capitol; California State University; the U.S. Naval Academy; the National Gallery of Art; the historic Appomattox Court House and the Arlington County, Va. Historic Preservation Department.

Upstairs from the exhibit hall, 65 seminars, workshops, craftsmanship demonstrations and keynotes also attracted a mix of contractors, building owners, architects and restoration/renovation specialists. Several sessions on sustainability drew very well as did "Period Kitchen Design;" "Classicism and Urban Infill;" "The Restoration of Period Porches" and "The Building Crafts Tour." Half of all attendees attend both the conference and the exhibits while the other half attends exhibits only.

The attendee composition was a rich mix of architects; general contractors; custom builders; developers; government facilities managers, (staff architects and construction project managers); interior designers; restoration/renovation specialists; artisan/craftspeople and old house owners/enthusiasts. Sixty-eight per cent of attendees say they worked on old houses in the last eighteen months; 28% restored historic churches and 31% did some sort of adaptive reuse.

The next Traditional Building Exhibition and Conference takes place in Chicago, October 21-23, 2010 at the Navy Pier.