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January forecast in landscape architecture - tough sledding is a New England sport

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Wow what a year! I spent my entire professional career in New England and as a Bostonian we have seen a lot of change in the past 30 years and especially in 2009. Throughout this uncertain economic time, William Fleming Associates (WFA) has been fortunate enough to work with many great clients and some of the best commercial developers throughout New England. As with many professions, landscape architecture is experiencing shrinking development projects because of the economic downturn. We are all busy reorganizing to meet a new goal - a 'green' goal. WFA has been a part of this evolving profession for over 30 years and no other time has been seen as so challenging as the upcoming problems we are facing. Consumers are taking environmental issues more seriously and these values will be important as the national merchants become 'green' to match this goal.

Our growth over the past decade along with the economic downturn has put tremendous pressure on our landscapes both suburban and rural. In order to develop centers for commerce in these underdeveloped areas we constructed the infrastructure to service these new locations of human activity. Incrementally our clients have financed many necessary city/town improvements from sewer, water, traffic and addressed neighborhood problems including an increased tax base. Therefore, skills of environmental design professionals will become increasingly valuable for all communities. The building industry professionals are working diligently to achieve a balance of thoughtful and profitable 'green' projects during this sledding season!

As we enter 2010, after a couple of disastrous economic years, we are confronted with the absolute need for innovation. Americans if nothing else are entrepreneurs! Every one of our clients is an innovator, explorer and to a certain extent are calculated risk takers. The new financial engineering that can best build the new infrastructure is the 'x' in the equation. The 'x' of financings equation is how to identify the on going value of savings to the end using tenants and the community at large and how profitable sustainable design / the LEED process is to our clients during the entire life of a project. Being a landscape architect and a practicing architect it always seemed logical to embrace a sustainable design process. We have worked to incorporate LID / rain garden / roof garden systems to increase energy efficiency and environmental quality. Now that I am LEED-NC-AP, building the future is about the bottom line, but to confront growing costs of energy and to improve quality of life. The ever an increasing educated public wants to be a part of the 'greening' of America.

Quite frankly all these issues have been kicked down the street for years. Many of these important systems have been accomplished without breaking the bank. WFA suggests further incremental inclusion a few of these 'green' building ideas so in time our clients can bank the results. The verification of these 'green'-building system tests is the cost savings. Design professionals are working diligently to incorporate the Sustainable Solutions and identify the results.

Our culture has been shocked into a world of conservation. The automobile industry leaders are now obsessed with efficiency, as the electric / hybrid car will soon be in our shopping center parking lots. Flat roofs will be vegetated, pitched roofs with photovoltaic / solar panels will use sun energy to heat the hot water, run automatic building systems and to re-energize customer's electric cars! The best innovators and entrepreneurs (our clients) are ready to meet the smart growth, integrated developments and other multi-use prototypes that will yield the "quality of life" desired by the public. If you have ever sled here in New England, you must be aggressive when traversing 'ice', 'rocks' and 'bare spots'. I am betting on our clients' experience of having sled on enough 'ice' in New England. Our clients will be the innovators of 'green' concepts with the best 'run' on investment. The 'green' goal is the one that makes our economy compete in a global setting. WFA has advocated all these issues for over 30 years. We are confident in our clients' ability and our design skills to succeed in this marketplace. WFA welcomes change for 2010 and the new decade! Our flexible flyer rails are soaped up and ready to go!

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