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January forecast in landscape architecture: Skating on thin ice in 2014

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Here in New England, skating on pond ice is a traditional past time that is enjoyed by all. However, the temperature and conditions are critical to creating a surface that can withstand all who want to go skating! As most New Englanders, and William Fleming Associates (WFA) can attest too, we all were like skaters on "thin ice" over these last few years. We worked with not only our current clients, but reached out to our industry suppliers, fabricators, subcontractors, and other big drivers such as LEED and SITE programs in our profession, just to skate on "thin ice." Throughout the economic crisis we observed, we thought and we listened, just like skating on thin ice but 2014 is a New Year! This year you can tell before getting out there on the pond, by the sound of blades scratching, that it is a good sign, its cold and the surface is stable! But like any good New Englander will tell you, "be careful on pond ice, there is always the edge, or a thin spot with running water!"

Our approach throughout the economic crisis and for the future was to become widely diversified. We maintained our core constituency of commercial clients through our strategic partners by providing responsible design for all our projects. The emphasis that we have been hearing from our commercial clients through these years is that landscape projects should be LID, sustainable and have native plant ecosystems. WFA has always had a big "horticulture emphasis" and have been applying these theories since WFA first got on the pond 25 years ago. WFA has strived to enrich and expand our hardscape portfolio with highly detailed design features in stainless steel, exotic stone, wood, stairs, railing systems, custom integrated light systems and negative edge swimming pool details. As WFA built on our already substantial technical expertise, we reached out to our architectural design friends. WFA was fortunate that our architecture clients had projects with high visibility. WFA worked on all aspects of design, including "forensics" on projects with problems for high end residential general contractors to partnering with institutional clients who chose us as designers to work closely with their design build contractors. These projects would lead us from one assignment to the next ranging from Boston Back Bay Historic permitting to Western Massachusetts Scenic Mountain Act permitting to vacation homes on islands and lake fronts throughout New England.

In 2014 we see that diversity of work beginning to aggregate. Interesting projects are in the works for this spring. WFA still maintains support to the commercial development community by providing responsible landscape design. Our clients continue to explore the market place and are identifying areas of opportunity every day. In addition to our commercial work, WFA has extensive experience in residential landscapes. The high end residential market has allowed us to be as creative as possible and to delve into testing design details. Again, getting diverse project types is important to WFA as we are generalists who are always learning and problem solving. Currently our institutional clients that hired us for a Memorial Gateway, has asked WFA to re-design a central forecourt in

phases to include a central clock tower and (2) memorial areas. For WFA this niche of design work is just adding to our expanded portfolio of experience.

WFA, like many firms, had to retrench over the past few years to get lean and efficient so not to break through the "thin ice." The difference is that when you have 25+ years in the profession, have invested in countless continuing education classes, conferences, lectures, in addition to 40+ hours of work 52 weeks a year, the experience adds up, but in the long run it's the "people," you work with who are the keys to our success! The relationships are the best part. Lifelong friends come to the rescue over and over. You return the favor by giving everything you can to make their project the very best you can deliver. Throughout this uncertain economic time, William Fleming Associates has been fortunate enough to work with many great clients and some of the best commercial developers throughout New England and we would like to thank all of them! See you on the pond in 2014!

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