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2020 Year in Review: Scott Bates, Erland Construction, Inc.

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Scott Bates

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What aspects of working from home have you enjoyed most? Surprisingly, I felt more productive than expected and did not miss the commute. During the stay-at-home advisory, it was nice to have the extra time at home with my wife and two teenage boys, especially with my oldest son who started college this fall. I quickly learned what TikTok was and made sure I didn't end up in any viral videos!

What is the best advice you have received, and who was it from? After I graduated from Colby College, I interned with the Boulos Company, a real estate development business in Portland, ME. Joe Boulos, the president, took me aside and said if you want to succeed in real estate, you need to know how deals are put together but, more importantly, how the projects are estimated and built. I took his advice and got a job with a Maine design/build contractor and worked in the field and in the estimating department to get my feet wet. I've been in construction ever since and am indebted to Joe for this career advice.

What was your greatest professional accomplishment or most notable project, deal, or transaction in 2020? Our greatest professional accomplishment was keeping our essential projects operating safely during the stay-at-home advisory and then having our teams jump back in without hesitation once nonessential construction resumed. We've relied heavily on the oversight of our field teams and their ability to build within unimaginable constraints while keeping everyone safe, and for that, we are incredibly grateful. The most notable projects deserving recognition are our large multi-family and senior living jobs that never stopped, the continued progress on New Heights for EMD Serono, and the athletics addition for Cotting School that broke ground during the peak of COVID-19.

What are your predictions for commercial real estate in 2021? The byproduct of the pandemic on the local development and construction world is showing residential and mixed-use projects remaining strong and lab projects flourishing. Developers are pursuing speculative lab development more than

ever, pivoting and repositioning their office product towards the life science market, especially in areas outside of Cambridge and Boston. The office market is in a state of flux until everyone understands the post-vaccine new normal. Companies are moving towards a more flexible model and office layout that will accommodate a 'work from home' schedule and ensure the health and safety of employees when they do return.

What was the most difficult part of working during the pandemic of 2020? How quickly the virus evolved and the devastation it was causing. Once we had the guidelines from the CDC, directives from the State, and support from industry associations, our Crisis Management Team put procedures in place that were implemented and reinforced by each of our incredible employees and practiced by our subcontractor partners. Determining which projects were permitted to continue as 'essential' while 'pausing' others and reallocating staff was also a challenge. This experience has helped us grow as an industry and left a lasting impact on how we maintain safety.

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