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## Undertaking a new project? Pay attention early to media inquiries - by Harry Zlokower

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As development picks up, journalists too are on the lookout, scouring records and scouting each other's coverage in hopes of breaking stories on new acquisitions, plans, groundbreakings and

more. As quickly as plans are filed or demolition and construction begins, reporters are reaching out to owners, contractors, lenders and architects to verify facts, obtain quotes and find fresh angles on what is going to rise at that vacant site or happen to that boarded up building suddenly teeming with workers and construction signage.

If you are the developer, builder or other key player, then be prepared for the sudden attention, the phone calls and e-mails requesting information. It is not an invasion of privacy, rather journalists doing their job of researching what is happening, what to expect and who is behind it all.

While some queries can be unwanted and bothersome, they should also be viewed as an opportunity to build brand and, equally as important, to set the record straight as soon as possible.

Be prepared to spend some time and money on media relations if for no other reason than to manage the narrative and promote accuracy of the news stories that will be presented to the public now and in the future. Get ahead of the game by conferring early with your partners and suppliers to create statements and strategies to jointly tell your story the way you want it to be told. Prepare an approved and accurate press release early on, and if possible, issue it at an appropriate time. Delegate a designated spokesperson to manage inquiries and consider interfacing yourself with certain reporters and have your spokesperson sit in. Such efforts will go a long way in easing the stress of public communication later on and may even help to deliver that next project.

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