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New merger brings new opportunity for Dooling Woodbrier Architects

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Towards the end of the third quarter of 2007, Richard DeCoste, the owner of Woodbrier Associates, Inc., and I began the conversation about a possible merger of our two firms. We had known each other professionally for 20 years and knew enough about each other to trust in these talks, which quickly gathered momentum.

We moved forward with the help of Richardson & Tyler and Rodman & Rodman, our Attorney and CPA, and filed the articles of merger for Dooling Woodbrier Architects, Inc., with the commonwealth in January.

And, it's working!

Richard and I had both created successful practices with different client bases:

*Woodbrier focused on commercial, high tech, life sciences and

*Dooling's focus was on retail and institutional work.

Common to both principals and underlying our going forward is a shared commitment to deal creatively with our client's issues and develop new possibilities in their projects while employing the best staff and consultants available to us.

For example, STF Enterprises' three building, mixed-use, retail-residential project has recently broken ground in Milton, Mass. This project includes the renovation and reuse of two historic mill buildings at and over the Neponset River as well as a 14 unit residential condo - over retail - over parking structure.

Steve Foley's initial phase included the services of Ned Corcoran, land use attorney, and Richard DeCoste in a 2 1/2 year public approvals process involving officials of the commonwealth and the town of Milton involving twelve agencies and committees. Richard's experience in working with public authorities represented a huge contribution to the owner's need for approval of an environmentally charged and politically sensitive location.

The site issues at Milton also represent a huge opportunity. The property is located close to a nexus of bus service and abuts an MBTA rail service station.

Coupled with the convenience of neighborhood services, the transit orientation of this project anticipates the strong sales promise of the Smart Growth movement of the last few years and also capitalizes on the sustainable/green design issues which play a very important part in the future of architectural design.

Mixed-use, challenging sites and tight schedules are the likely scenario moving forward. We're counting on it.

Our retail clients, both developers and their tenants, are a source of great energy, demanding of imagination, listening, patience, flexibility and a fast turnaround. The retail world fascinates me with the opportunity of participating on a series of ad hoc delivery teams formed before the initial

planning board hearings and completing at the last job meeting in a site trailer. The ever widening relationships amongst these teams is a source of great satisfaction and professional pride for all of us at DWA.

It's so encouraging to see the retail world aggressively take on issues of sustainability, including the basic matter of the conservation/reuse of existing buildings, where appropriate. This stand is appreciated by most architects and is welcomed as a design challenge at DWA.

Our current work with Carpionato Properties includes just such a project involving a new street front retail wing which will set the tone for an existing, established center's renovation in Johnston, R.I. Our work with Stop & Shop, much of it renovation these days, includes collaboration with their in-house staff who have developed sophisticated control systems for both their lighting and energy management systems. That interface is another source of satisfaction for us and our MEP/FP engineers at BER and EDS.

Within our new firm there is an investment of time and money being made to stay current with new technology for project delivery. We are on the foothills of BIM, and have been using modeling effectively to accelerate the design process from the planning board through the construction process.

Chris Nobel, Esq., was in our office earlier this month for a BSA learning lunch on the subject of BIM. He gave me pause when he suggested that unless we get with this new delivery program aggressively, we are toast!

DWA's collective experience, which has a focus on good communication that addresses opportunities and breakdowns directly, has seen us prosper while avoiding the toaster. In a marketplace where power and authority are shifting daily, Richard and I trust that our commitment to serving our clients well with imagination and gratitude are habits that will allow DWA to continue to prosper into the future as we gain and welcome new firm principals and employees.

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