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2023 promises a lot - by Brett Pelletier

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Brett Pelletier

What that is, exactly, I'm not sure. I don't make predictions and I don't do forecasts. I leave that to the economists and the fortune tellers. I was at a meeting last week where an economist had announced that they modified their prediction for a recession in 2023 to 50/50. I think that's fine. I'm totally fine with fence sitting. I myself am a fence sitter. I think another way of looking at it is that we're contemplative, thoughtful, and we don't rush to judgement. I think those characteristics are perfectly well suited for the world of business and have served many quite well in the business of real estate.

The Fed has been active, if not constantly so, and the markets have responded in ways that have been sometimes predictable and sometimes not. Par for the course, I suppose. The stock market is doing things we assumed it would, and some things we didn't think were possible. Real estate markets are here, there, and everywhere in between. After a prolonged period of waiting and seeing, and waiting some more, something has to happen. But it will likely happen at a moderate pace, which again, I'm perfectly fine with. Fast growing economies and markets give me motion sickness, and everyone knows the famous analogy of trying to make swift maneuvers in a cruise ship. Never easy and without casualty.

It's a little like the remote work conversation. Some people are 100% against it, because it erodes corporate culture and stifles innovation and synergy. Some people are 100% for it because it gives people, on both sides, the flexibility to do their work and live their lives. I note that I'm again on the fence. I like the flexibility to work from home when I want, but I also enjoy the time I get with friends and colleagues in person, preferably with some wine and cheese, or at least a fresh cup of coffee. There's a happy medium there to be found for every worker and every office. I'm sure of it. There has to be. My commute into Boston is starting to look pretty good when I compare it to my commute from my bedroom to my home office. When I'm home, I like to be home, not at work...at least most of the time. In a society that praises the constant grind and idolizes being too busy to stand still, it's important to remind ourselves of what is essential in our lives.

Real estate has always been about the intersection of the natural and built environments, but I find that most people rarely think of it in those terms. That should change and perhaps this will serve as a friendly reminder that real estate is all around us and we, as users, influencers, and professionals, have a hand in shaping that environment. I take that social and civic responsibility very seriously. A friend of mine just wrote a book in which he describes the term "community real estate development" as a way to get people to think about all real estate development through the lens of community and not just constrained by the property lines. As public policy begins to reflect the permanent hybrid work reality, real estate markets have already begun responding to changing environments, conditions, and realities.

I will remind you that all housing is good housing and there is a renewed interest for increasing density, availability, and affordability in 2023, from everywhere. Pay attention to those conversations and engage yourself and others in them. You are stewards of the built environment and therefore you must constantly communicate and engage with the community, and you have many

opportunities to balance the scales of equity, inclusion, dignity, respect, and kindness. I challenge you to take action and pay attention to your surroundings, especially in your own community.

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