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A state of total confusion and uncertainty always brings with it new opportunities

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As we look forward to the fall and beyond, it seems that everyone wants answers and signs of what is to come over the next few months or even the next year. The economy is heading downward, there is talk that we are now actually in a recession and there are several theories on the extent. We have government doing everything in their power to stimulate and stabilize things and the whole world is looking to the U.S. and asking what happened.

As architects, we are in a unique position to get a good picture of the industry. We are on the front end of new projects and in the thick of financing, permitting and construction. Many clients look to us to see if we are busy, are we working on new projects or are the existing projects moving ahead. Clients are looking for reassurance that the decisions they are making are correct, that they will not be left behind when the market turns or that they do not miss opportunities that appear in these uncertain times. No one wants to make mistakes which could spell ruin for them.

Many clients have been sitting with approvals in place for projects not started but have found that the market is stagnant or non-existent. Some own land and are trying to determine what the best use for the parcel is. Still others have been waiting after completing projects in the last couple years with cash looking for the big deal. Every one of these presents as opportunity that could be pursued as a means for additional work or new work for your company. Sit down with your clients and review the projects they have and what their status is. Do research of what the marketplace is asking for and reevaluate these projects in light of what you have learned. Many of these projects were designed a few years ago in a very different environment. Think of all that you and your client have learned in the interim, speak to the users of projects and get additional feedback, ask what they would change now that they have lived with your creation. This will allow you and the client to rethink things, consider changes to bring them back to marketability or maybe decide that the land is better left undeveloped at this time.

Unfortunately we do not know anything for certain. We have weathered the up and down cycles before and remained in this industry for the long haul. We will get through this time in much the same way, maybe not as happy but more experienced and wiser. We can educate ourselves on what is happening, network with our peers, contact our professional colleagues, and ask our suppliers for information. Now is the time to research the marketplace and determine what direction we feel most comfortable in pursuing.

So what do we see? The opportunities are there and they exist in the niches we hear about every day. There is a trend towards more compact urban areas, improved quality of life, and a desire for more free time. These are all things that the industry needs to listen to and respond to. The people who can provide this to buyers will be the ones who succeed in this industry. Retooling your company to provide for these desires will position you to explore new opportunities and help your

success in the future.

So what is the future? Where is the next big opportunity? What is the right time to move forward? If we were sure of the correct answers we would be miles ahead of our competition and stand to be very successful. All the tools are at our disposal to make informative decisions and allow us to put our best effort into our next project. We just need to get to work.

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