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William Fleming's forecast for landscape architecture: Change is good and it will be green

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Wow what a year! Throughout this uncertain economic time, William Fleming Associates (WFA) has been fortunate enough to work with great clients and some of the best commercial developers throughout New England. As with many professions, landscape architecture is experiencing shrinking development projects because of the economic downturn.

Along with a new president and memory of \$4/gallon for gas, we can envision a promise of simple change in 2009. We are all busy reorganizing to meet a new goal - a "green" goal. WFA has been a part of this evolving profession for over 30 years and no other time has been seen as so challenging as the upcoming problems we are facing. The consumer has been battered with the slow economy, making them weary. However, they seek good products and comfort in quality environments. Consumers are taking environmental issues more seriously and these values will be important as the national merchants become green to match this goal. Therefore, skills of environmental design professionals will become increasingly valuable for all communities and building industry professionals wanting to achieve a thoughtful and profitable green project.

Environmental conservation and smart growth were always considered good, but, up until lately, forgotten. The recent change in attitude reflects the economic uncertainty and the green revival. The key to new development will be Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines. While LEED is complex and ever changing, the basic parameters are fairly common sense. Our strategic partners are integrating these new building technologies and Low Impact Design (LID) for site storm water quality into all their new projects. Landscape design components stress water conservation by using green roofs, rain gardens, bio-swales, porous pavement and xeriscape plant principles.

The LID is only one part, but plays a significant role in changing the permitting process. All permit authorities now ask for much more detailed permitting documents and the process has a longer review cycle with the promise of a sustainable environment.

As LEED became more main stream resulting from cost savings and environmental quality published in the media, the guidelines expanded into more specific market sectors. Now LEED for retail, commercial interiors and homes will be introduced. Large institutional, governmental and educational institutions are more frequently striving to meet these new standards while conducting realistic verification of cost savings. Having the legal and accounting community embrace LEED is necessary as the fundamental goals are impeded by these professions. We must provide them with the factual results that will be necessary for them to implement - from dark sky communities requiring lower light levels to the financing of new facilities with incremental up front costs, but with savings over time. The goals of a sustainable economy are the change we must seek.

The green goal is the one that makes our economy work. WFA has advocated all these issues for

over 20 years. We are confident in our clients' ability and ambition to succeed in this marketplace. Change is good and it will be green. WFA welcomes change for 2009.

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