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For businesses to maintain their strength and viability, innovation is the key to staying relevant

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As we move further into 2009's uncertainty, the current economic climate will demand that we all stay focused. In our minds, embracing the concept of innovation is equally important. During a time of great change this can be both challenging and uplifting. The need for businesses, institutions and communities to maintain their strength and viability begs the question - Is innovation a necessity or a luxury? We believe it is not only a necessity, but a core value that needs to rise to the top.

Like many area businesses and institutions, JCJ is fortunate to have a venerable history (the firm was founded in 1936). One of the questions confronting companies such as ours: how do we hang onto our values, free ourselves of legacy thinking and meet the current turmoil with flexibility and clarity? We believe embracing innovation is a way to recommit to clients, communities and our core values.

In his book, *Innovation Nation*, John Kao asserts that the Innovation Nation is "... a country that is committed to constantly reinventing the nature of its innovation capabilities to improve the lot of humanity." We see the practice of architecture exhibiting its "innovation capability" as the built environment can often result in a "greater good". Believing architecture can strengthen, link and preserve communities, we see no better time to use innovation to reconfirm this position.

There are innumerable ways to turn today's challenges into opportunities if you embrace innovation. Some of the ways JCJ Architecture continues to embrace innovation include encouraging environmentally sensitive design; leveraging projects to have an impact beyond the expected; and recommitting to our "communities"... all core values that have sustained our firm.

Going Green: The Watkinson School and Project FROG

Studies have shown that green buildings can dramatically reduce energy use, CO2 emissions, water use and solid waste. Today, green/sustainable design doesn't just make economic sense, it is a global imperative. We have embraced this emerging mandate by working with our clients to use new products and technologies to solve problems and facilitate delivery. In working with The Watkinson School on its new Center for Science and Global Citizenship, we have joined Project FROG to deliver a new energy-neutral building as an alternative to traditional classroom construction. These classrooms will not only be flexible, adaptable, affordable and quick to deploy, but they will exemplify and amplify the Center's program and mission. Innovation that enables students and faculty to witness the teachings of the Center as it is designed and constructed.

Leveraging a Project's Impact: Public Safety Complexes

A greater understanding of our role as architect allows JCJ to define our projects as catalysts for change. In the current economic environment, the design and construction of better police and fire facilities can both improve public safety and stimulate significant economic development. The completed new police headquarters in Middletown and new public safety facilities under construction

in Greenwich and Hartford serve to link commercial zones and neighborhoods with services that benefit the entire community. Strategically locating these facilities and incorporating innovative design results in what we call "community integration." Taking the concept of community policing one step further, new facilities are being sited in locations that help erase arbitrary lines between residents, businesses and public servants. Innovation that stretches public dollars well beyond the immediate project.

Recommitting to our Communities: University of Hartford's Urban Design Studio

JCJ's relationship with the University of Hartford dates back to the 1960s. Recently, the University looked to JCJ as a partner in creating its Masters of Architecture Program in its College of Engineering, Technology and Architecture. JCJ responded by endowing the guest lecture series and the student design exhibition and most recently, adapted loft space in its Hartford headquarters to accommodate the program's Urban Design Studio. The firm clearly understands the value in linking various "communities" (urban, business, academic). Innovative use of resources that make the physical connection between students, an urban center and an active design practice more than theoretical.

Like all businesses today, JCJ is facing a time that calls for strong leadership and clear priorities. We encourage all firms to stay focused while also engaging in innovation that serves to strengthen its corporate and community citizenship.

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