



# TPC Architects, Inc.

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## TPC Architects, Inc. Newsletter

### Does Design Matter? Selected comments from design winners...

#### **Mark W Steele, FAIA, AICP, MW Steele Group Inc**

Design, or planning with thoughtful intention, matters in any economy, but it matters even more when environmental constraints are highest. With a world population approaching 9 billion by 2050, half of the population living in urban areas, and an increasingly stressed planetary ecosystem, there is no other choice than thoughtful action, which creates a built environment integrated with the natural environment. Actions we take now create the context for 2050. Short-term isolated gain, without concern for externalized long-term consequences, is what led to this confluence of economic and environmental challenges. Collaborative, interdisciplinary, and innovative thinking, with a longer view, is the path from a perspective of scarcity to one of abundance. The natural world and human experience offer countless examples of how to live within our environmental means. Our need to create and re-creating built environments that respond efficiently to regional ecosystems, is why design matters now more than ever.

#### **Mark Cavagnero , Cavagnero Associates Architects**

Machines can implement and produce faster than humans; other countries can mimic and copy American technology and approaches. It is in creativity, however, that

### Ground-up or Adaptive Use?

Many churches are finding value in the adaptive use of existing space versus "ground up" construction. Even if you own land you should carefully evaluate the full development cost against the completed facilities before going down this path. What about your church?



*Should you purchase and develop this property for your church...*



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*...or consider purchasing and renovating space in a retail center?*

value is still made and demand remains high. Now, the resurgence of the economy is depending on creativity and its manifestation in design to regain the marketplace, through imagination, ambition and hope for the future. Architecture has always been riveted in the challenges of design and construction, site and program, budget and schedule. We are now in a place where the larger American ethos can compete best in terms of creativity. In the new economy, design is the most significant competitive edge. When funding is tight and options are few, the well designed solutions will leverage their creativity to capture the retrained confidence and excitement available. Our future will value design more clearly than it has ever been valued before.

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## Programmatic Needs

The first thing you should evaluate is your ministry needs. You may wish to review our October 2009 Newsletter for some "Ministry Master Planning" guidelines (use "Past Newsletters" link). You must know how much and what type of site and building space you need to meet your ministry needs before embarking on ANY purchase or development project.

Take the case of a 1,000 person church that purchases a large commercial building (such as an old Circuit City). It may be that parking is adequate (this is not a guarantee) and that the interior space can accommodate a suitably sized worship room. But what about children's play yards and other outside activities? What will be involved in creating the necessary functions in this building; what degree of renovation will this entail?

## Financial Investment

Our January 2010 Newsletter presented the anatomy of project costs. You should review the various non-construction and construction cost categories to determine what savings you may expect by renovating an existing building vs. building from scratch. Examples:

1. **Agency / Development Fees.** This is a very important consideration. Many communities today have increased their development fees in order to generate revenue and stay lucid. You may be surprised to find out that such things as sewer connection fees or traffic impact fees are much larger than you'd expect. If you can adaptively use a building and site for which these fees do not apply (i.e. no change in parking or increase in sewer impact) you may save a significant amount of money.
2. **Site Development Costs.** From underground utilities to storm water mitigation to paving and landscaping, site development costs for new projects can be very high. You may be able to save a large percentage of these costs, and sometimes nearly all of them, by adaptively use an existing building.
3. **Building Costs.** Although your renovation project may involve some modifications to the building shell (such as raising the roof over the worship room), it is likely that the majority of the basic building envelope can be used. You will need to account for changes to the mechanical system (more tonnage for assembly occupancy), and will likely have some electrical upgrade costs to handle specialty lighting and other technical systems.
4. **Misc. Costs.** As with new construction you'll need to address such things as sports systems, kitchen functions, staging / curtains, audio reinforcement, visual imaging, acoustical treatment, and seating. If you have a baptismal function this must be provided.

## Design Quality, Effectiveness

There is a lot of difference between a "church plant" moving into their first permanent facility and an established church locating into long-term facilities. You should consider the potential to create a church facility or campus that succeeds with both design quality and effectiveness. Following are some items for your checklist:

- Location in the community.
- Adjacencies (such as land use around you).
- Architectural style, caliber, exterior materials.
- People and vehicle circulation.
- Site access and visual identify of point of entrance.
- Relative volume of spaces (ratio of ceiling height to room area).
- Fixed elements (such as structural columns or concrete walls).

## Summary

After preparing your Ministry Master Plan you are ready to search for either property to develop or existing real estate to use. Evaluate each option using the general advice in this article. Expand / customize these criteria to meet the needs of your analysis. Take the time to investigate thoroughly (such as agency fees). Check to see if your church use will require a Use Permit or other entitlement in the adaptive use location (it

likely will). Examine the timeline for the development. Talk to your lender to see if they have concerns about financing an adaptive use project.

Adaptive use investigation is, in this author's opinion, well worth the effort. TPC Architects has seen this approach be a significant benefit to churches in recent years. With the amount of vacant real estate on the market we suspect that this will be a resource to churches for some time.

If you have any questions about this subject please feel free to call or email us here at TPC Architects.

### **Next Month: Construction Testing**

I encourage you to contact me personally with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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