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Planning · Architecture · Design

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TPC Architects, Inc. Newsletter

The Great Recession an Engine of Change? Could Be.

Stymied by a still-reeling economy, D.C. architects return to design as a healing profession
By Leigh Franke

The AIA|DC Awards for Unbuilt Architecture react to today's sinking economy by offering humble contributions of restorative placemaking, not grand theoretical doctrines that do little more than leave the designer's artistic stamp. In many cases, this is how previous generations of architects dealt with a down economy-by retreating to the studio.....and focusing architecture in on itself.

If the architecture of *Unbuilt*→*Built* is notable because of its influence, the works featured in the National Building Museum's satellite exhibit *Could Be: The AIA|DC Awards for Unbuilt Architecture* (on display at the [AIA|DC Center for Architecture](#) through

Church Real Estate Acquisition

How can an effective church who is experiencing healthy growth acquire suitable, affordable facilities today? Unlike a few years ago, there are some options that have been created by the recession and its effect on the real estate market.

Perhaps you read the article in the June 15th edition of the *Sacramento Business Journal* entitled "[Area Churches Find Great Real Estate Deals](#)," written by Sanford Nax. Sanford commented on how many Sacramento-area churches are "taking advantage of low interest rates and prices to buy property and provide permanent homes for their active congregations." He provided examples of five churches who have made important purchases recently. In that TPC Architects had a part in the planning of several of these churches, I would like to share my perspective with you.

Sun Grove Community Church, Elk Grove

This church, with 750 weekend attendees, was using Franklin High School for many years, keeping their eyes open for an opportunity to establish permanent facilities in the Elk Grove community. They considered developing a large land parcel they owned, but development fees were an obstacle. When the five year-old Gold's Gym building was offered for sale by the bank, they pursued this purchase. It was necessary to apply for a rezone from the City, which God granted via a unanimous vote by the Planning Commission and City Council. TPC represented the church during this process.

Sun Grove Community Church moved into this building in March, converting the locker rooms into classrooms and turning the workout floor into assembly space. This is a great example of a church being alert to the marketplace and establishing an effective facility via adaptive use.

June) are remarkable for their aspirations and activism. Faced with a sagging economy and a shrinking pool of clients, the younger architects featured in this exhibit have come up with designs that strive to renew architecture as an agent of positive social and economic change. The projects identified by the AIA|DC exhibit may be more or less successful at one day becoming reality than the redirected energies of previous generations, but they are defiantly out in the world, facilitating the improvement of social and infrastructural ills.

The Inscape Publico Haiti Relief Dwelling, by Washington, D.C.'s Inscape Studio, responds to the need for prefabricated rapidly buildable and affordable housing that can also withstand seismic and wind forces. The National Nursery project proposed for Washington's National Mall by University of Virginia landscape architecture students Andrea Parker and Ashley Wolff revisits original plans by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to incorporate a botanical garden around the Washington Monument. The student proposal readapts this plan to restore the city's tree canopy and better connect the park with the rest of downtown Washington.

Acqua Venezia: Prototypes for a Sustainable Water Economy by Nicole Keroack and Alexa Bush presents a solution to Venice's



New Home of Sun Grove Community Church in Elk Grove, CA

Crosspointe Church of Natomas

Pastor John Stone had the vision, along with other leaders in the church, to establish a permanent home for the Crosspointe Church congregation. The church team began investigating properties using TPC Architects as necessary to evaluate suitability and potential ministry capacity. God led them to a lease-option contract for a 6,300 sq. ft. warehouse shell owned by the Buzz Oates Group of Companies. They recently exercised the purchase option and now own the building.

Liberty Towers Church of the Nazarene, Sacramento

TPC prepared a master plan for this church's large parcel on Elkhorn Blvd. in 1984, followed by a renovation and expansion phase to create space for school classrooms. In 1995 it was time to design a Family Life Center, providing a gymnasium and additional classroom space. In 2005 the church decided to sell six acres to a developer for \$3.5 million. The development never materialized, and the land fell into foreclosure. Liberty Towers bought it back from the court recently for \$675,000. They plan to make the land available for some kind of community benefit.

As an interesting side note for this church, they recently established a lease with Cornerstone Christian School, which will move from Roseville to Liberty Towers. According to real estate agent Brian Jacks of East West Commercial, who handled this transaction, "Cornerstone now has full access to an extensive facility with spacious classrooms, multiple playgrounds, renovated auditorium and large gymnasium while Liberty Towers enjoys a tenant that fulfills one of its core missions to provide a Christian education for the community." TPC had met with Cornerstone several years ago when they were considering a ground-up project. Seeing how God brought both Christian institutions together in this way is gratifying.

longstanding challenges of attaining potable water. The students proposed a restoration of the city's historic freshwater cisterns fed into public fountains, coupled with a prototype container that would function as a souvenir but is also recyclable. Many of the other projects in the exhibit follow a similar theme: responding to local ecosystem challenges, adapting cultural traditions, and using architecture as a means for social change.

How many of these will be featured in the next generation's P/A Awards retrospective? Probably the ones that are built, which means that the current generation of architects' career-long quest may not be to evolve new formal and theoretical languages for architecture. It may simply be to get their work from "could be" to "should be" to "is."

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Liberty Towers Family Life Center, Sacramento, CA

Summary

There are many other examples today of how God's church is acquiring either undeveloped land or existing commercial real estate. Although there are still challenges with lenders, the marketplace offers many opportunities today for the church to acquire available real estate. At TPC we have experienced a cooperative attitude by local agencies, especially when the church has a community posture. We encourage you to take a careful look at these options as you consider the next step with your facility needs.

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

Sincerely,

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