



# TPC Architects, Inc.

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## TPC Architects, Inc. Newsletter

### Has enough been done with building codes to make skyscrapers safe?

When the towers at the World Trade Center collapsed nearly a decade ago, some thought skyscrapers would never be built again. But building codes have been changed to reflect what was learned, including increasing the fire resistance of building components and insulation and adding stairways and impact-resistant walls. But not all that has been recommended has been instituted. "I'm troubled by our slowness in adopting some of these recommendations, which have extremely low cost and would do a lot of good. But I do think we have made some progress," said Gene Corley, a structural engineer and authority on building collapse.

### AIA Forecasts Modest Rise in Nonresidential Construction Spending

The Washington, D.C.-based American Institute of Architects (AIA) semi-annual Consensus Construction Forecast, a survey of the nation's leading construction forecasters, projects a 6.4 percent increase in spending in 2012.

### July Sees Construction Service Price Increase

## SITE SELECTION

Some churches have experienced frustration or disappointment with the ability of their property to meet their needs. Perhaps it is undersized to accomplish their ministry goals, or perhaps its location has proved to be a hindrance. Sometimes the church has experienced development costs or agency obstacles that were great challenges. In this month's article, TPC Architects has teamed with civil engineer Bob Eynck of RFE Engineering to share some basic planning advice regarding site selection.

### Site Selection Considerations

Remember, the primary goal of your property is to meet your church's ministry needs, which might also include joint or shared use by your community. And so you should be careful to assess these needs before looking for land. You may wish to review TPC's [October 2009 Newsletter](#) for advice on this task, or just call us here.

There is a lot of vacant real estate on the market today. Here is a quick initial checklist as you consider purchasing such space:

- Location, Location, Location. *It's true; make sure this is not a hindrance.*
- Functional, Adaptable? *Is the existing building space functional or reasonably adaptable for church use?*
- Demolition Required? *Would you need to demolish everything and start over?*
- Parking. *Is there enough; how accessible is it?*
- Existing improvements? *What is the quality; will you inherit maintenance problems?*

O.K., let's say that you decide to locate undeveloped property. Here's another checklist:

- Location, Location, Location. No surprise here!
- Zoning. Make sure you understand what the local jurisdiction will require for a church to be located here. Check out the requirements for a use permit or other entitlements, along with the timing and fees.
- Topography. You'll here planners talk about "net usable land". Does the slope of this land render a portion of it unusable? Also, what about the horizontal geometry?
- Environmental. This is a topic of its own. A prudent church researches the extent and impact of site features and mitigation requirements. Be especially alert to floodplains, wetlands, and similar elements.
- Available Utilities - Water, Sanitary Sewer, Power, Telephone, Gas
- Access. Is access to the site convenient; does it trigger circulation problems? What about parking access?

According to an analysis of producer price index figures released by the Associated General Contractors of America in Arlington, Va., the amount contractors pay for construction materials and charge for completed projects both increased in July.

### An Ounce of Prevention

In the wake of Hurricane Irene, there has been plenty of discussion about whether the media overhyped the storm and whether federal, state, and municipal governments may have overreacted. While the storm may not have been as destructive to some areas as originally feared, can we really complain about over-preparation for a storm that took numerous lives and left tens of billions of dollars of damages behind? Is it ever a bad thing to err on the side of caution where the preservation of life, safety, and property is involved?

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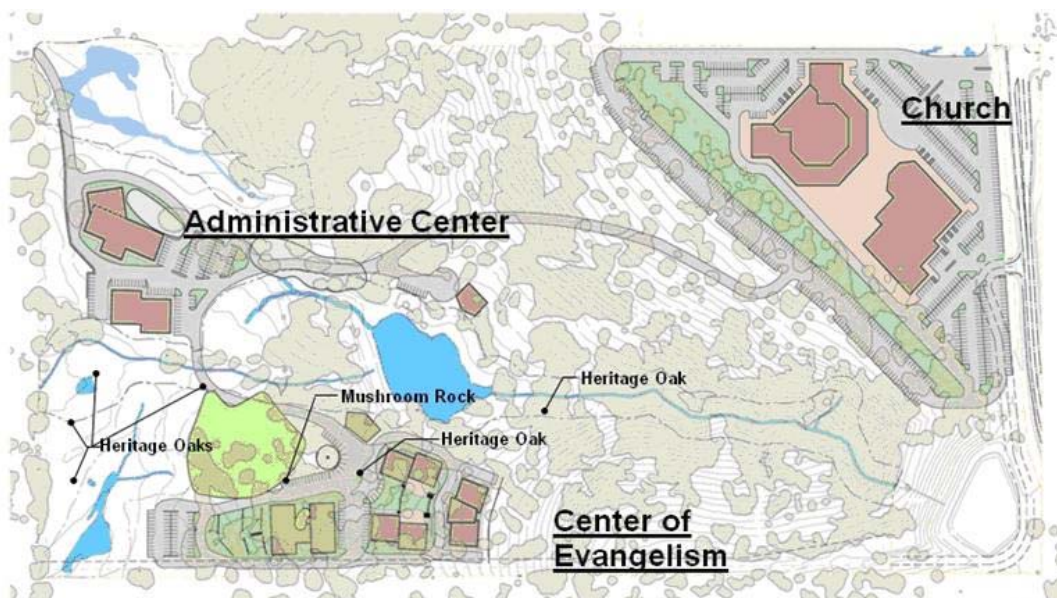
*How would you evaluate this large property in Placer County, CA? (Areas of 20% slope, oak trees, lake, wetlands, site access...)*

#### Caution: Be Wary of "Cheap" Land

Just because the land is cheap or almost free doesn't mean it will be cheap to develop. Consider the costs of development; use these costs to determine if it makes sense to get the cheap land. You may be surprised!

### How To Get Started

- Using the above criteria and process, identify a property with potential for your church. You may be wise to retain the services of a professional planning team to assist you.
- Prepare a Site and Building Feasibility Study. This should be done as soon as possible, and certainly before you invest non-refundable money into an offer. If your initial analysis encourages you to pursue the purchase of the property, build a Due Diligence period into the offer.
- Meet with Local Officials - Building, Planning and Public Works Departments. Your planner will guide you in asking the appropriate questions.
- Identify Potential Problem Areas
- Determine Cost Ramifications
- Identify Project Schedule



*Example of an Initial Feasibility Study*

## Summary

Plan, plan, plan; and then don't forget to plan! Don't rush into a site purchase without your eyes wide open and your research properly done. Be willing to walk away from a site that looks good on the surface but comes with many unknowns. Commit yourself to a professional planning process, knowing that this effort and cost is extremely valuable to your church and could well protect you from costly errors.

This short article, by nature, is only a primer to the site selection topic. But our hope is that it will alert you to the need to plan. Your site selection is the single most important factor in the future development and usability of your church facilities.

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

Sincerely,

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