Construction Management as a Business Model

Presentation and Discussion:

In this struggling economy, a new field of opportunity is emerging for Landscape Architects. As Construction Managers, our profession can contribute in a meaningful way to the built environment. With technically savvy Landscape Architects on the construction end of any landscape-driven project, details are attended to and contractors are held accountable. SiteWorks has transformed its vision of these possibilities into a profitable firm. We’d like to share this profitable professional option with attendees.

Why should only architects or engineers from international construction-management firms oversee the building of our projects, especially the large public projects that have come to be identified with “landscape urbanism?” Such landscape-driven projects demand a construction-management team that includes the Landscape Architect. The unique perspective that we bring to construction management is valued by clients and designers alike, but we must be ready to set aside the traditional role of designer. The challenge in this new role is to foster the design through the complex administrative and technical process of construction.

We see construction management as an emerging market for Landscape Architects’ professional services. Our presentation will share what SiteWorks has done to create a place at the table, to nurture relationships and build confidence in our worth among clients and designers. One important element to our practice is to work well with others. Often we act as translators between designers and contractors, which requires both technical expertise and patience. This requires different skills and a different attitude than the traditional role of designer.

Learning Objectives:

1) Learn how to diversify your construction management work portfolio
2) Learn what types of construction management firms to market for large multi-disciplined design projects
3) Learn how to market public agencies in your municipality

Key Presenters:
Annette P. Wilkus, ASLA is the founding Principal of SiteWorks Landscape Architecture in New York. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Bachelor of Science Landscape Architecture; the University of Pennsylvania with a Masters of Landscape Architecture and holds a certificate in Construction Management from New York University. She has over 30 years of landscape architecture experience focused on the public realm. Ms. Wilkus started SiteWorks after recognizing the need for knowledge encompassing both site and landscape implementation expertise on construction sites. As such she has been recognized by National Association of Professional Women and New York’s Women Builders Council as an Outstanding Women in Construction.

Andrew Caddock RLA and LEED-AP, has more than 15 years experience in design and project management. Since joining SiteWorks in 2007 he has worked in construction management for public projects including The High Line, Teardrop Park South and Queens Plaza. Andrew has
been instrumental to the success and growth of SiteWorks and plays a key role in all aspects of the business. He has been guest instructor at City College of New York and the University of Minnesota. “What makes good projects great is an understanding of site, context and natural and cultural processes – and collaboration!”

Outline of Discussion:

I. Introduction

ANECDOTE - WE’VE ALL BEEN FRUSTRATED BY THE LACK OF LA’S PERSPECTIVE IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT...

a. What we do that designers don’t do
b. How we accomplish that
c. Why we want more landscape architects taking this role

II. SiteWorks: Planting the Seed

a. Build on passion and skills – you have to love the process of construction and CM
b. Identify the market-who hires us
c. Communicate with client and designers-work well with others
d. Gain respect of both client and designer
e. Have fun

PROJECT: TEARDROP PARK – BATTERY PARK CITY, APW BEGAN AT MNLA-COMPLETED AS SITEWORKS, 6 YEARS OF WORK

III. Cultivation

a. Gain skills by working with firm that had studio dedicated to CM
b. Gain knowledge beyond Landscape Architecture
   i. Certificate in CM
   ii. LEED AP
   iii. Join Construction Managers Association of America
c. Build strong relationships with government agencies, other designers
d. Be able to relinquish design control
   i. Understand limitations with design on construction site
e. Act as counsel between designer and contractor

PROJECT: THE HIGH LINE, NY, NY - FIRST PROJECT WON SOLELY AS SITEWORKS, FIRST EMPLOYEE BROUGHT ON, WORKED INTENSIVELY TOGETHER TO DEVELOP CULTURE OF OFFICE AND IDENTITY OF PRACTICE, PROJECT CURRENTLY ON YEAR 5

IV. Growth

a. Teach (young) designers to understand construction process
   i. Documentation: RFI, Shop drawings, Change Orders, etc.
   ii. Schedule: Document turnaround time, CPM Scheduling
   iii. Communication: Act as intermediary or “translator”
b. Work ethic

PROJECT: QUEENS PLAZA, QUEENS, NYC - FOR NYC EDC AND NYC PARKS, ROLE OF “DESIGN/CM”, EDUCATE LOW-BID GC, ETC...
V. Expanding Roles
   a. Local community-minded CM
   b. Large engineering firms
   c. Landscape Architects and LA-driven design projects
   d. Local Government agencies involved in construction

PROJECT: Hunter’s Point South, Long Island City, NY – Constructability and Probable cost services, strength of CM team, TBA

PROJECT: Hudson Park, NY, NY - Pre-construction services, team continuity, client is agency/partnership

VI. Branching out – Design for other clients
   a. Grand Street (NY, NY)
   b. Aqueduct Racetrack (Queens, NY)

VII. Branching out - Constructability Review
   a. Thomas Balsley Associates: varies project in FL and TX
   b. West 8: Miami Beach Soundscape, FL
   c. Nancy Owns Studio: NYC Parks Design Excellence Projects

Queens Plaza Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Project

The High Line Section II