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Urban re-use in Long Island City and throughout New York City: Think inside and outside the box

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The general U.S. economy is starting to pick up and consequently, construction is also starting to pick up. Some of the sectors that have seen improvement are single-family home additions, code compliance work, and retail constructions and extensions. My own firm has experienced resurgence in filings and design work. Some of the bigger projects that I'm working on have been completed and newer large projects are starting to become available.

I personally believe that Long Island City in Queens is the next Williamsburg, Brooklyn. There are quite a bit of development and construction in the area. Van Dam St. and the area along the Long Island Exwy. are starting to have a high demand for commercial and warehouse space. There's also quite a bit of apartment high-end residential development along the waterfront in Long Island city. There are quite a few buildings in that neighborhood that are abandoned factories and warehouses that are literally minutes away from midtown Manhattan. The 59th St. bridge and the midtown tunnel are literally within minutes of the area, and the majority of the building stock is salvageable.

In that area, I have several projects. One of my favorites is a 150,000 s/f conversion from warehouse building to artist studios with commercial office space and manufacturing, known as a multiuse building. The cost of demolishing large warehouse buildings in Long Island City is very expensive, so many owners select to keep the buildings and to convert the inside uses to more popular functions. People find that neighborhood to be very charming because it has nice restaurants on Vernon Blvd. and the 7 train is right there. Manhattan is five minutes away and the area also has some of the best views of midtown Manhattan.

One can purchase lots or empty building in the area with affordable prices. These buildings are often just shells needing to be retrofitted in order to be more usable. You need insulation, sheet rock, plumbing, lighting, storefront and many different amenities. The Building Department and Zoning Regulations are very accommodating, and actually favors this kind of development in Long Island City at the moment. I have been specializing in converting warehouse buildings into multiuse buildings all over New York City. The process of converting these buildings is much simpler than new construction. This often involves getting a new certificate of occupancy. The final product is acceptable to the owner because it generates a nice cash flow and also maintains the building structure without expensive demolition work.

I am a conservationist and enjoy keeping the old buildings intact and finding creative reuse for these buildings. Many older buildings are one-story, with exits into the yard, into the street or others that are otherwise easily accomplished, ultimately allowing for an easy conversion. My practice also is involved with converting factories into churches and public assembly spaces, schools, among many other different uses. I converted a post office into a public school, a factory into a community-use

building, and many public assembly type structures.

I would like to encourage people to consider older buildings in often overlooked neighborhoods as a distinct possibility for urban reuse and consider doing the zoning and feasibility study analysis for the conversions of these buildings into more contemporary and in-demand uses. This new thinking often provides real estate developers a tremendous opportunity to move quickly, make minor changes to buildings and meet immediate cash rewards. Performa's when they include the restoration of existing structures are often much more favorable than when it requires new structures.

Urban reuse of existing structures is one of the most profitable ways of providing for retail and community use buildings. The time and money saved by a creative urban reuse is truly spectacular.

I encourage you to think inside and outside the box.

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