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Engineering • Surveying • Planning

The View from Andy's Desk

February 4, 2010-Andrew R. Cassano is a City/Regional Planner and Professional Land Surveyor with 40 year of experience in Northern California. He is CEO of Nevada City Engineering, Inc., a firm offering planning, surveying, and civil engineering consulting to the Sierra Nevada and small towns since 1978

For Bargain Hunters

For the lucky ones that have money and staying power, there could not possibly be a better time to go bargain hunting for real estate values. If you enjoy this position, you probably should make your moves now, as there are early signs of strengthening real estate values arriving at my desk.

We can help with due diligence. Whether it's a single family building site or a large, complex development acreage, we can rapidly and efficiently evaluate property. No, we are not home inspectors, but few consultants in Northern California know more about land and land use than we do. We evaluate land use potential in light of government regulations, land constraints, and political climate. And we can develop preliminary cost estimates that you can use in your return on investment calculations.

In Western Nevada County, we know the rules already based on our on-going experience with active land use applications and community development projects. Elsewhere in our region, we know who to talk to and what questions to ask. Remember, a bargain is not a bargain if your idea won't work or if implementation costs way more than you think.

For information on single family home building sites, see California Rural Homesite on our website at www.nevadacityengineering.com. Look for other information there, too, covering various development permit and land division processes. If you or your client is looking at land, contact us for a free quick evaluation of issues and a budget for a preliminary land use report or development feasibility study.

Eight Ways to Add Value

I've consistently called the current economy, the time to add value use various strategies and clean up activities. While you're waiting to sell, consider whether any of these activities might enhance the value of your land:

1. **Resolve code violations.** This is the time to legalize that building out back that you built or remodeled without a permit. It will be come and issue when you or your heirs sell the

property. We can assist by preparing compliance documents and working with government officials.

2. **Resolve boundary and setback issues.** If there are any boundary disagreements or setback issues, consider taking steps to resolve them by commissioning a survey and perhaps negotiating with your neighbor. We can help you with estimates and options.
3. **Complete boundary line adjustments.** Maybe a lot line adjustment between you and your neighbor could improve the value of both of your properties. Are your boundaries logical? Are there lines close to, or even passing through your buildings? These situations hurt value.
4. **Remodel and consider home additions.** Prices on labor and materials have never been better. Take advantage of this climate by investing in your property. Your Realtor® can assist you in strategies that will sell the best in the future.
5. **Complete grading activities.** Grading for individual homesites now require engineered grading permits, like commercial projects. Getting the grading plans approved and grading completed can ready a home site for future uses. We can help with designs to achieve usable driveways in difficult terrain situations.
6. **Obtain planning permits.** You may be in a situation where a formal "entitlement" or planning permit could add value to your land. This might include a tentative land division, use permit, or other approvals. We can assist you in evaluating such options.
7. **Remove clouds on title.** Sometimes there is a gap in historical ownership or other ambiguity that should be resolved for future generations. Your Title Company can identify such situations and we can assist your real estate attorney with possible solutions including quiet title actions.
8. **Clear Brush.** Consider hiring a qualified masticating or hand clearing company to "park out" your land. It's common sense for fire safety, too.