

# A Prescription for Large Development Projects in 2015: Perseverance!

BY JILL R. LONG

Large development projects are not for the faint of heart. They test a multitude of resources, including patience, economic capital, the ability to compromise, acumen, creativity, and probably most of all, one's sanity. There are moments during a difficult neighborhood meeting or complicated entitlement issue when I must remind myself that I *will* persevere.

In the 15 years I have been working on large development projects, I have come to believe that more than anything else, perseverance is the name of the game. In looking to the future, perseverance will most likely be the deciding factor on many projects and will determine if a project makes it. Looking back on 2014, it seems that some of the most trying and difficult projects came to a successful conclusion because someone on the team just wouldn't give up. They hung on like a dog to an old ratty rope — focused on staying in the game above all else. It didn't matter at the end what the rope looked like, so long as that dog still had it.

Upon Googling the word "perseverance," the first result described perfectly the necessary ingredient for a successful development project: "***steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.***" There is always delay and difficulty. An understaffed city, an unhappy vocal neighbor or a contractor waiting on materials will all contribute to delay, difficulty and frustration. But when all is said and done and we drive by a beautiful project, the only thing we see is the end result, which is a contribution to the community. The shape of the contribution can change — maybe it's a park or a neighborhood grocery store or a sustainable multi-family housing project. What doesn't change is that it brings something positive to the community.

The land use process that we go through in Oregon is *hard*. Developers must run a gauntlet of regulation: from comprehensive plans and zoning codes to neighborhood input. It can feel endless and insurmountable, but the entire regulatory process was designed with one goal in mind: to make real estate projects into a positive contribution to the community. Although that has a "do-gooder" ring to it, that goal is worth pursuing and one that can be accomplished. It's not at the expense of profit and property rights, but in balance with them. Finding the right balance takes time and creativity, and above all else, perseverance.

Some of the greatest accomplishments of our time came out of great acts of perseverance. When J.K. Rowling wrote the Harry Potter series, she was rejected a dozen times and told to "get a day job" before she finally found a publisher. She is now the second-greatest female entertainer in the world, second only to Oprah. When Walt Disney decided to make the Mary Poppins book series into a movie, it took him 16 years of negotiating with the author before he finally was able to proceed. Milton Hershey had three failed candy companies before he finally founded Hershey's Milk Chocolate and brought milk chocolate to the masses while creating hundreds of jobs in his hometown of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It took Oregon Governor Tom McCall over four years to pass Oregon's seminal land-planning bill in 1973, creating the framework that has made Oregon one of the most desirable places to live.

It is under Tom McCall's legacy of perseverance that those who work on real estate development projects thrive today. From Governor McCall's effort to our own struggles with delay and difficulty, it's perseverance that wins the day. ■



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