



The COUNCIL EXAMINER

Official Publication of the National Council of Building Designer Certification

WINTER 2009

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President's Message

What a difference a year makes! These words were probably never truer in our business lives than they are today. A year ago the economy was moving along in an ever expanding upward momentum, with only a few pockets of concerns in the housing areas of South Florida and Las Vegas. All predictions were that these concerns would be contained to those pockets of overbuilt areas. Now a year later we are seeing the results of a major collapse of the stock market, the prospect of a perhaps deep recession and by all accounts a true depression in the housing sector. Now while this may sound all doom and gloom, we must remember that we, as designers, are at the front end of any recovery and when housing starts moving again, it will be because we are back doing our profession.

While no one that knows me would ever accuse me of being a wide eyed optimist, I do want to share something with you. Over my drafting board I have a saying that reminds me that attitude does count. It simply states:

"The universe always says yes."

Once you realizes that, you see how it all depends on the questions one asks: "Will I survive this downturn" gets the same "YES" as "Will I fail." "Should I improve my skills and prepare for the recovery" gets the same "YES" as "Should I sit on my duff and do nothing?"

Our parents and grandparents who survived the Great Depression and World War II did not give up or run away from their problems. They rolled up their sleeves and went to work seeing how they could get themselves back on their feet and improve their personal lives and save their country as well. What we face is nowhere near what they had to do. But, I have faith that even if it turns out to be as bad as it was then, we will also survive and prosper. But we all know that things, especially in housing, are going to change. Is the era of the McMansion over? What will replace it? Will general housing sizes begin to decrease? I can venture to guess that at the very least designs will need to become more cost effective and more green, as well as much more energy efficient. Are we all taking this slow time to learn all we can so we can answer the ques-

tions that the future will ask us? What should I be looking for in my next house? As building designers we should begin to see ourselves as leading the future in housing, not just following the trends.

Also during this slow down we should be encouraging all designers to get certified and have that backing to show they are serious about their profession and are the leaders in the resurgence of smart, cost effective, well designed, green housing, from the simple 1,000 square foot cottage to the 10,000 square foot mansions and beyond.

It is my goal, with your help, to make the NCBDC Certification a standard for Residential Designers and designers of commercial light construction. To do this, I am asking all of you to start asking yourself the right questions and send me your answers. How can we improve our exam? How can we get more designers interested in taking the exam? How can we achieve our goal of becoming the standard for the residential design profession? We all know that to achieve power we need the num-

bers to back it up. So, our first goal should be to increase the number of certified designers. I refuse to base my thinking for the coming year on how many professionals will give up their certification in the misguided belief that saving a mere \$100.00 will improve their standing in the profession. Rather, my charge is to ask "How can we take this opportunity to double our numbers in the next year?"

Now that the election is over, no matter if you are a Republican or a Democrat, Libertarian, or other, we were all voting for a change in this election. As Americans, we are also looking for a better future, as we always have. So while the Universe may always say "Yes," we all, as Americans, can say with sincerity that when it comes to finding a solution to our current problems, and a belief in a better future, we can all say "Yes we can!"

Leonard J. Vogel, CPBD
President



ANNUAL REPORT

**Bob Juengert CPBD, AIBD,
AIA, FISP, NCARB
NCBDC Administrator**

NCBDC continues to mature, following a positive and directed course. This year we certified a total of twenty two designers nationwide. We currently have one hundred and six pending applications for examinations and have fifty members on our retired roster. Our total roster now totals six hundred and eighty one. This represents approximately a ten percent growth for 2008. We have had two hundred and Eighty two inquiries from our web site. We have issued sixty nine Study Guides, thirty four electronically.



The Council now offers an electronic seal for convenient inclusion in electronically generated drawings. This seal is available at a cost of \$40.00. Just send us a check in that amount with a written request and this innovation is yours. Our alliance with the San Francisco Institute of Architecture offers excellent Continuing Education courses. The Institute has offered a fifty percent tuition reduction for designers certified by our Council. Visit www.sfia.net for detailed information as to courses offered and tuition charges. When applying, send evidence of your certification in order to reduce the tuition.

Working with Harry Strout, our computer consultant, we have significantly improved the structure, integrity and maintainability of our CPBD database. Proper administration of this crucial information has cut down on errors in mailings and has re-

sulted in improved efficiency in our operations.

The single most challenging process in the administration of this Council is the tracking and continued service for a constantly moving target of certified designers and their contact information. In an effort to alleviate this problem, we have added contact information from our database on the reverse side of our 2009 renewal invoices that will send to all members on January 15th. Please correct any erroneous data we have on you and return the form with your 2009 renewal payment to our Walnut Creek, CA office.

We have made a major functional improvement to our web site whereby CPBD members can verify and correct contact information as listed on our web site. We encourage the examiners to participate in this effort.

The next challenge is the accomplishment of CEU work by our Certified Designers. This will be accomplished by a similar approach we have developed for tracking and improving the renewal payments by our Certified Designers. The challenge is to make our Designers aware of their CEU status and finding more at home study programs for their use in accomplishing our minimal requirements of eight hours per annum.



Bob and Harry working together

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Is the official newsletter of the National Council of Building Designer Certification

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Published By

NCBDC

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NCBDC Certification, Value and Relevance

Jon Simpson, CPBD

In the past few years, design professionals all over Washington State have been taking the certification exam offered through NCBDC. In fact, Washington designers made up a large increase in NCBDC membership during that time. So, why do so many of us in Washington State see the need for attaining this credential? It comes down to very fundamental reasoning: it provides value and relevance to those who attain it.

NCBDC certification provides value to its professional members by substantiating their qualifications and ability to practice thoughtful and effective design solutions. This credential is gaining greater recognition at local building departments as equal to that of a "registered design professional" which is the term used in the current IBC/IRC as well as the level of expertise most building officials expect in a set of plan documents prepared by someone who identifies themselves as a professional practitioner.

So, NCBDC certification provides relevance to its professional members in that the standards of qualification and continuing membership are recognized where it counts, at the building departments as well as by a growing majority of building officials. Here are some quick examples:

North Bend, Washington: A newly qualified NCBDC member attempted submittal of a residential project in the jurisdiction in late 2007. The city ordinance barred anyone from submitting plans without the seal of a "registered design professional". I

spoke with the building official and explained the benefits of the NCBDC certification program and that the individual attempting to submit had just passed their exam. The official agreed with the relevant value of certification and has changed policy to recognized NCBDC seals. The plans were stamped and signed and then accepted for permit review and issuance.



Chelan, Washington: The City of Chelan has a limitation of 4,000 square feet of total building area for any residential structure including attached accessory use such as a garage that they will accept without the seal of a "registered design professional". I recently submitted a new residence design with a total area of

just under 6,000 square feet, with several additional accessory components. During my initial code study at the city, I took the opportunity to speak with all the appropriate staff who would be reviewing the plans, including the building official. This was a very beneficial discussion not only for my project but for all other NCBDC certified designers who will be doing work in Chelan in the future. Once the certification program was explained instructions were given how to access the NCBDC web site. The entire staff agreed that they would not have any problem accepting the "sealed" plan documents and, in fact, their review was completed without any significant comments or corrections.

These are just two examples of how the NCBDC credential is being received in Washington State and that recognition continues to grow as more design professionals become members here. So, when I'm asked if there is a recognizable value and relevance to being a NCBDC certified

professional building designer, of course, my answer is absolutely yes.

It is my hope that as more individuals throughout the nation take that step to become certified that the Code Council will follow along with the building departments and officials and make the seal formally recognized in the IBC/IRC codes. This organization and the standards it upholds for the profession continue to gain recognition for raising the bar of qualification and expertise to those who really should be considered as professional practitioners of building design.

And by the way, prior to our joining NCBDC, Washington State had its own well established certification program. But, the switch to NCBDC brought our profession here to a whole new and better level. The Continuing Education Unit requirement for renewal has meant that more of us are spending the time to further improve our knowledge and skills related to our profession. And, ultimately, clients benefit from all of this with better finished products. The bar continues to be held at a level that those who are serious about maintaining their own relevance in and for the profession can achieve the goal of certification.

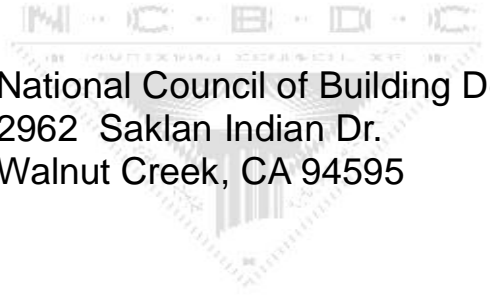
So, you know a program and an organization is successful when the benefits of membership cover all the bases. NCBDC is one of those organizations that have achieved that for not only itself but also for its members and the public that use the services of its members. Real value and relevance, make it part of your portfolio.

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