



# TFA

## Monthly Newsletter

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### IN THE NEWS

## Make No Little Plans... A Master Planning Primer

by Bob Henderson

A century-old quote by well-known architect, Daniel Burnham, still resonates among owners, architects and planners to this day. That's because whether it's for a city, a campus or a reservation, there will always be owners' interest in how to best plan for and invest in the sustainability and development of their land holdings.

As a developer, builder and development manager for over forty years, Keating has directed, executed or reviewed many master plans...and frankly, we've had time to sort through both the good and ordinary plans; and whether large or small in scope, ambitious or modest in budget, success seems to have little to do with size, everything to do with the chemistry in the approach.

The audience for this article is casino owners, operators and an enviable range of consultants who serve the industry, all with perspective on how to manage master planning...the competing interests, the budget constraints and the everyday fiduciary responsibilities of operating a casino. But the owner's simple question is:

what are the ingredients of a successful master plan?

Naturally, every property and the circumstances driving the plans are unique, but there do seem to be some common ingredients to successful master planning.

- **Vision and Commitment to the Approach:** this must emanate from the smallest circle of ownership... providing the "big picture" goals, the challenge to discover new ideas, the freedom to "dream."
- **Teamwork:** vision is the essential start button, but it takes a team to execute the vision; at its best this team has many skills and perspectives---land and building programming/planning; market awareness; and economics/finance, environmental, sustainability and construction cost analysis skills. Importantly, the team will also have a ready understanding of and trust in the give-and-take of creating the plan.
- **Goals-Setting:** always a good measure of master planning, well defined goals will address issues such as land development vs. preservation, facili-

### Seneca Gaming Corporation Names New CEO

6/1/17 – [BuffaloNews.com](http://BuffaloNews.com)

### Advocacy Nonprofit, Congress Criticize Settlement of Native Tribe Fund Mismanagement

6/6/17 – [Nonprofitquarterly.org](http://Nonprofitquarterly.org)

### Once Appearing New Settlement, Wind River Legal Dispute Drags On

6/11/17 – [Trib.com](http://Trib.com)

### DraftKings, FanDuel Merger Violates Antitrust Laws, FTC Says

6/19/17 – [DailyNews.com](http://DailyNews.com)

### National Indian Gaming Association Chooses David Bean as Vice Chairs

6/23/17 – [Indianz.com](http://Indianz.com)

### Department of Interior to Examine Alternative Land Into Trust Analysis For Wampanoag; Casino Hopes Still Alive

7/1/17 – [CapeCod.com](http://CapeCod.com)

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ties expansion vs. contraction, partnering with outside interests, full vs. shared control of project finance.

- **Market Awareness:** we have found one of the looser underpinnings of good master planning is the disconnect between owner beliefs and the realities in using master plans to grow a market; typically the best results in master planning are grounded in newly commissioned market analyses or a well-honed internal knowledge of their customer base and the realities of their regional and local markets.
- **Property Understanding:** owners and their consultants may often know the lines and contours of their property, the opportunities and constraints affecting future development...but we sometimes note how a lack of property knowledge undercuts the value of planning efforts---e.g., some land-rich owners advance plans for expensive and unnecessarily dense development, while other owners confront problems with master planned "hubs," where customers face long and often unclear walk connections between activities. One answer to these problems is more early communication between members of the master plan team.
- **Cost Estimation/Validation:** easy to recommend, often harder to deliver due to the very nature of master planning...sketchy drawings, incomplete programs, changing markets can all limit the value of the best conceptual estimates. Yet some of the best master planning---meaning plans that have been implemented---is driven by attention to just these details.

- **The Value of Infrastructure:** the neglected stepchild of master planning is a thoughtful utilities and roadway infrastructure plan---truly the backbone of many good master plans; it includes emphasis on circulation of all types---customer, employee and service vehicles---and attention to both the clarity of path and walking distance. We have been asked to revisit some early master plans, and attention to these details seems to yield unanticipated customer appreciation and repeat visitation.

This broad look at the ingredients of effective master planning is in many ways an endorsement of an idea that now has deep roots in the gaming industry, especially with the newer generation of resort casino development. In our experience, this commitment to master planning is under-appreciated in other sectors of the real estate market.

Looking forward, the demand for master planning in the industry will grow as we continue to envision new lifestyles that integrate our world of

work with our world of entertainment and play. Indeed, it seems possible that many of our future destinations (reservations and beyond) will be founded on the fluid movement of people from one destination to another, and that the places we seek to spend our time will be joined by a common theme: the ability/capacity to offer a complete lifestyle experience, whether in Las Vegas, the burgeoning East/Northeast markets or along the Gulf and West Coasts.

So it's fair to say that the call to "Make no little plans..." will continue to resonate, because (to complete the quote) "...they have no magic to stir men's blood...Make big plans..." prudently.

*Bob Henderson is President of Keating Consulting, LLC, a Philadelphia-based project management and development advisory firm. This and other Keating companies have developed, built or provided project management services for real estate assets valued in excess of \$15 billion over the past forty years.*



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