

“Shovel Ready” is a Matter of Public Policy

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There has been quite a bit of ink and paper dedicated throughout the nation to the creation of “Shovel Ready” development sites. Most of the focus of that discussion has addressed tangible issues and site characteristics such as infrastructure, wetlands and site design. What may have been missed in the discussion is the concept of Shovel Ready being more than hard data and tangible site characteristics – it’s a matter of public policy.

Consider this scenario – A private landowner holds an optimal site for industrial development. The greenfield site is properly zoned with high quality utilities and exceptional access. It is therefore “Shovel Ready”? Perhaps not.

Do community decision-makers support the development of the site? Is there general public support, or at least a lack of credible opposition? If that opposition exists, is there enough political will to make potentially unpopular decisions that may well be to the long term benefit of the community? Site characteristics alone do not make a site Shovel Ready. They have to be backed up with well reasoned public policy and a firm resolve. Bottom line – if a community doesn’t support an otherwise optimal development site, it isn’t Shovel Ready. Recommendation – don’t just know your site – know your community.

Shovel Ready Certificate Available to All

Starting with the original Build Now – NY round in 1999, Empire State Development has been certifying sites as Shovel Ready for the purpose of marketing to the site selection and corporate facilities community. Until now, that designation was only available to Build Now – NY designated sites.

Empire State Development and the Governor’s Office of Regulatory Reform are in the process of rolling out a program that will allow independent sites, both public and private, to be designated as Shovel Ready. The program is designed to implement a process to develop site information sufficient for the site selection and corporate facilities community to make informed business decisions. By collecting and compiling site data and background information, and by satisfying all the criteria of the just released Certification Checklist, your industrial or office site may be eligible. Give us a call for more information!