



Executive of the Month: Cavallaro takes the reins as Gilbane Building Co.'s new executive VP, leading the Northeast divisions

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New York, NY The New York Real Estate Journal (NYREJ) sat down with Rich Cavallaro, this month's executive of the month, for a question and answer session. Cavallaro is Gilbane's new executive vice president, leading the company's Northeast divisions.

NYREJ: Why did you decide to take this position with Gilbane?

Made in New York Campus at Bush Terminal

Cavallaro: This new marriage with Gilbane made a lot of sense to me as I learned more about the company, its expectations for itself, and the work it is currently doing in the region. To begin with, Gilbane is a family-owned firm with an exceptional commitment to safety, diversity, innovation, quality and operational excellence. The company has a long history of putting its clients first – and everything I have learned since coming aboard confirms that our client relationships are second to none. That is how Gilbane has done business for generations. It is also exactly how I have aimed to do business domestically and internationally throughout my career and in my previous roles. Finally, when you look at Gilbane's current, diverse portfolio – I will be managing the New York, New Jersey, and New England divisions – you'll see why this position is such a natural fit. There is a lot of exciting work already happening, and I'm very excited for what the future has in store.

NYREJ: Speaking of your previous experience, you were previously leading Skanska USA Civil. What are your biggest takeaways from that role?

Cavallaro: Over the last decade, I've had the great pleasure of leading major firms in our industry. I was at Skanska for 23 years, and in that time, we achieved quite a lot. We were able to take on new initiatives and new challenges that resulted in our business doubling in size. Our projects included some of the largest infrastructure projects in the nation – and we did it all while striving for premier safety results and helping push the industry to take on the safety challenge. I am very proud of how we managed to grow while adhering to our fundamental principles, and I intend to carry over that tradition with me to Gilbane.

NYREJ: What is your vision for Gilbane?

Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Cavallaro: First and foremost, my goal is to ensure that the transition from Bill Gilbane III, my predecessor, is as smooth and seamless as possible. I'll be engaging directly with clients and employees across New York, New Jersey and New England and I'll be focused on keeping the bar as high as possible with regard to safety, quality, and efficiency. As I'm leading that transition, I want to continue to raise the bar on safety here. Gilbane already has a robust and thriving culture of safety, but we cannot rest on our laurels, however impressive they may be. We will set – and meet – ambitious goals regarding worker safety. The only acceptable safety goal needs to be zero accidents. No one should be hurt on a project. That might seem like a difficult task, but it is absolutely achievable. Finally, I want to continue Gilbane's tradition of operational excellence. Gilbane leads complex long-term projects across a number of sectors, and we pride ourselves on delivering those projects on time and on budget. Continuing those traditions – and improving them where possible – is my vision for the company.

NYREJ: What do you think are the biggest opportunities for Gilbane in the New York market?

Cavallaro: The diversity of our on-going work – which includes major projects in the five boroughs and upstate across multiple sectors, including residential, commercial, healthcare, public, education and institutional sectors – is our greatest opportunity. We are developing a world-class healthcare campus for the Mohawk Valley Health System. We are transforming a long-time Buffalo institution into a global destination at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. We are building a new YMCA community and wellness facility in the Bronx. These projects are on top of a number of other similarly transformative projects across the region and alongside our residential and commercial work which includes a robust interiors portfolio. In other words, our growth trajectory means doing more of this work – and always continuing to find new opportunities in emerging sectors and areas.

NYREJ: What, in your mind, are some of the most important challenges facing the construction sector at the moment?

Northeast Bronx YMCA

Cavallaro: Construction, if you look at it in a historical sense, has always been a pathway to the middle-class. It provides stable, well-paying jobs for anyone with a strong work ethic and a desire to learn. With that said, I think our industry must continue to prioritize inclusivity and diversity in order to thrive over the long-term. For too long, too many communities have been excluded – or not provided the same opportunities as others may have been. Gilbane, to its credit, has been leading

the way in changing this culture by offering a variety of training programs, scholarships, and initiatives aimed at creating opportunities for and empowering workers of color, for women, and for other historically disadvantaged groups. Frankly it is just the right thing to do. That being said, there is also a business case for diversity, because diverse groups create diverse thoughts which leads to innovation. Innovation creates a competitive edge in very competitive markets. Diversity without inclusion is frankly useless, so it is paramount that we have an inclusive culture at Gilbane because without it, diversity and innovation cannot succeed. Gilbane has set a high bar in terms of working with MWBE businesses. Continuing that tradition is extremely important to me.

NYREJ: Is there anything about New York that most excites you?

Cavallaro: Coming to work for Gilbane represents a homecoming for me personally. I am a born and bred New Yorker from the five boroughs and, as such, I have always felt a very special connection to the Empire State. I am very excited and happy to get the opportunity to manage the New York business for Gilbane, which is helping to build a bright future for our city and our state. Leading a leading firms' New York and New Jersey division is a perfect fit for me. I am very excited to work with and engage local communities across the state and help create the projects that New Yorkers need and deserve in order to thrive.

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