



2020 Ones to Watch: Graham Christensen, Douglaston Development

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Name: Graham Christensen

Company: Douglaston Development

Title: Project Manager

Education: Connecticut College, B.A. in Architectural Studies and Economics, and Columbia University, M.S. in Real Estate Development

Which project, deal, or transaction was the “game-changer” in the advancement of your career?

My hiring by Douglaston Development in 2016 coincided with the commencement of the rezoning process for 601 West 29th St. (ULURP). I have since been involved in all aspects of the project including the rezoning and entitlements, underwriting and budgeting, programming and architectural plan development, and raising the debt and equity. The 931-unit project broke ground in July 2019 and has been pivotal to my career development and advancement because I have learned everything about the development process hands-on starting with the rezoning.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession?

Networking is a vital part of the real estate industry. I remember what it was like starting out in the business, so I try to make myself available to those looking to get into the industry, offering them any advice or helpful tips. The professionals that guided me when I was beginning my career led me to pursuing a master’s degree in real estate and ultimately to my role at Douglaston Development. We recently had an intern I had by chance originally met with prior to her deciding to enroll in graduate school to pursue real estate development.

What led you to your current profession?

I always knew I wanted to positively impact the “built environment,” but originally thought I would do that by becoming an architect. After working for an architecture firm with clients that were predominately in the real estate field, I gravitated toward the development side of the business. My architectural studies and economics background coincide nicely with real estate development. Furthering my education through Columbia’s MSRED program further helped me polish my industry acumen.

What do you like most about your job?

The interdisciplinary nature of my role. My position within Douglaston requires me to interface with a wide range of people, companies and agencies, which means I am constantly learning. Each successful project requires a diverse array of people, with different views, backgrounds and varying strengths. This exposes me to an exponential amount of knowledge through which to learn and grow.

What can our political leaders do to increase equality in the workplace?

I think this is obviously a very complex and important issue. It would be helpful if leaders set parameters around the gender pay gap and maternity and paternity leave in the workplace.

If your life were made into a movie, what actor would you want to portray you?

Tom Hanks, because if he is portraying you then you have clearly done something right.

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