



2020 Ones to Watch: Joel Kolkmann, Douglaston Development

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Name: Joel Kolkmann

Company: Douglaston Development

Title: Project Manager, Affordable Housing

Education: BA – Clark University; MPA – Clark University; MBA – NYU Stern School of Business

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

My over 10-year career has focused on improving the social and economic vitality of New York City through public-private partnerships. The game-changer for my career is 705 10th Ave., a 160-unit mixed-use affordable housing building with an adjacent city developed public open space. This Hell’s Kitchen site was identified in 2009 as one of the affordable housing commitments for Hudson Yards. Located over an open Amtrak rail cut, the site poses several design and engineering challenges. Working with our expert design team, public agencies, and the local community, we anticipate construction commencing next year.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession?

One of the special things about the real estate industry is that there are numerous professional development and networking organizations. Throughout my career, I have been involved with several. I previously served on the board of directors of P/PREP (Public-Private Real Estate Professionals) and am a member of the New York Housing Conference’s Rising Leaders Network.

What led you to your current profession?

My career has spanned the non-profit, public and private sectors. Before my current role as an affordable housing project manager at Douglaston Development, I was a city planner at the NYC Department of City Planning. There, I built a strong foundation in land use, zoning and public approval processes. After some time, I learned that what I’d find most fulfilling would be to leverage my technical experience to conceive and implement community development projects. To make this transition, I pursued an MBA at NYU’s Stern School of Business and began work at Douglaston Development in 2017.

What do you like most about your job?

Relationship building. Real estate development, affordable housing or otherwise, is all about relationships. I love that my job requires that I work with such a wide range of people—designers, engineers, banks, city agencies, non-profits and civic leaders. Fitting together all the pieces of a project by working with these stakeholders is by far the most exciting, challenging, and rewarding part of my job.

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

Workplace equality is an important issue for both our political and business leaders. Together the two should continue to find ways through public-private partnerships to identify, train, employ, and develop real estate professionals from all backgrounds.

Who or what inspires you?

Mentors are very important to anyone's career. I've been fortunate enough to have had several in both the public and private sectors. Seeing their work and career trajectories has helped provide me with the framework for my own career path.

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

In my biopic there would be several scenes of lively community meetings. With his experience on Parks and Recreation, Adam Scott would be a good casting.

What social media platform do you use the most professionally?

I use LinkedIn!

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