



Exec. of the Month: Tom Scerbo charges boldly into the future as AECOM's new Metro New York region executive

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New York, NY The New York Real Estate Journal (NYREJ) spoke with Tom Scerbo, this month's executive of the month, for a question and answer session. Scerbo leads the Metro New York region for AECOM's Design and Consulting Services business.

NYREJ: How did you get started in the infrastructure/design field?

Scerbo: While studying architecture at New York Institute of Technology, I had a professor who challenged me to design a project without designing a building. So, here I am, an architecture student surrounded by some of the most iconic buildings in the world, being forced to imagine design in a new context. But this helped me think more critically about how architects can have a more active role in the design of cities, connecting people and places to create opportunities to grow. I continued my studies at Columbia University, working on larger and larger scale projects,

and upon graduating, I felt the best place for me was a large engineering firm. The first 15 years of my career were spent working with amazing engineers to design bridges, then transit projects, public spaces, and airport terminals. I felt at home designing large scale projects, just don't ask me to design a house! I wouldn't know where to start.

Metlife Tower Repositioning - Concept

NYREJ: In what ways has your training shaped your approach to leadership?

Scerbo: Architects are trained to collaborate and communicate ideas, so I spend a lot of time speaking with our teams to ensure we're creating an environment where we can innovate and bring the best of AECOM to solve our clients' most complex challenges. Since taking on this new role, I've worked to break down silos across the business, elevating design and increasing integration of digital technology throughout our technical practices. My approach has always been to find great people, build high performing teams, and get out of the way. When we have the right teams and tools in place, our clients and our projects will benefit.

Battery Park Resiliency Project – Rendering

NYREJ: What is your vision for the future of AECOM in the Metro New York market?

Scerbo: AECOM is a large, multi-disciplinary organization known for delivering high-profile, critical infrastructure projects throughout Metro New York. However, my vision is not simply to be the biggest design and consulting firm, but to be the firm making the biggest impact in communities across the city. I was born and raised in the Bronx, one of six living in a one-bedroom apartment right by I-95 and the 6 train, and I practically spent every summer in Pelham Bay Park. So, I've experienced firsthand the importance of access to safe open spaces, public transit, and affordable housing. AECOM will continue to lead in transportation, water, alternative energy, and the environment, but most people are not aware we are also one of the largest architecture and interior design practices in New York and New Jersey. Our urban design and planning teams are designing the most innovative and resilient public realm projects across the region, helping increase access to services and address some of the most pressing issues facing New York City today. I'm honored and humbled to be able to bring my design experience, collaborative approach and passion for my community to this new position.

Second Avenue Subway

NYREJ: What projects are you most excited about right now?

Scerbo: The projects I'm most interested in right now are those targeted to areas in our region which have been historically underfunded and underserved. Projects like the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 up to Harlem, the Metro-North service expansion with four new stations in the east Bronx, and most importantly, investing in and repairing public housing. Now is the time to take the bold steps required to fund and deliver massive capital improvements which will make our communities more connected and prepared for growth. I'm excited to see projects like the Battery Park City Resiliency Project and the Brooklyn Bridge – Montgomery Coastal Resilience Project move forward and provide communities on the west and east side of Manhattan with much needed flood risk mitigation, new public space, and enhanced mobility. I'm also excited for the opportunities provided by the rezoning of Midtown Manhattan as we come out of the pandemic and work towards a better, more balanced city for everyone.

NYREJ: In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges facing the AEC industry?

Scerbo: The biggest challenge our industry faces is addressing climate change while building a more sustainable and resilient future. AECOM is bringing some of the best and brightest from around the globe to speak with our clients about the future of transportation, workplaces, and our city in general. How do we address vacancy issues in the real estate market and in what ways can we take advantage of repositioning those buildings? In the past year, we've learned we can redefine and reset our relationship with the environment, and with Local Law 97, this is not just an aspiration but a tangible, imminent challenge. Local Law 97 is an indicator of the importance of reducing our carbon footprint locally and foreshadows where both local and national regulations are heading. This is where we see an opportunity to help our clients reposition their assets to not only comply with the regulations, but also position them in a market which is actively participating in the conversation about the local and global impact of our built environment. With our focus on cross-discipline collaboration, AECOM is poised to lead the way in helping developers and owners retrofit their buildings to reduce carbon emissions and implement future proof designs. At AECOM, our focus is to "think and act globally," which is both a mantra and a way to differentiate us from our competitors. We can solve some of the biggest challenges facing New York City by leveraging our global talent pool and experience. I'm excited to lead the way forward!

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540