



2021 Women in Building Services: Xia Li, LERA Consulting Structural Engineers

June 22, 2021 - Spotlights

Name: Xia Li

Title: Associate

Company Name: LERA Consulting Structural Engineers

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be an architect in high school but I was drawn more to engineering in college.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Working at LERA for almost seven years, I very much enjoyed working on various iconic super-tall towers, mixed-use complexes, residential buildings, life science buildings and peer reviews, etc. In the past year, I am most proud of managing two projects at Schuylkill Yards in Philadelphia. One is a 28-story tower designed for a mix of office, life science and residential uses. The other is a 14-floor ground-up life science building. Both as parts of Phase I of Schuylkill Yards development, I am excited to see those two buildings rising in the near future!

What books or social media influencers would you recommend to other women?

As a dog mom and dog lover, I would like to recommend @allaboutbunny on Instagram to other women. Bunny is a Sheepadoodle who can use buttons to communicate. The daily interactions between Bunny and her mom through the buttons are hilarious, loving and yet sometimes thought-provoking.

Inspired by such, I got buttons for my cavalier as well. He is able to use "Treat" and "Outside" buttons so far, but seems unwilling to learn more.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career?

Halle Doenitz was my mentor for the first few years with LERA. Although we did not work together on same projects, she was always available and positive to my questions and concerns about work and life, especially from the perspective as a woman engineer. Her creativity and courage have

eventually led her to found her own structural engineering business on the west coast. Happy for her.

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months?

Over a year into the pandemic, I was seeing an increased need of life science components through projects I worked on. As we step further into reopening, I am anticipating life science related projects will still dominate the building industry for few years.

How do you contribute to your community or profession?

Carrying on the good tradition of the mentor program, I have served as mentor to several engineers as well as interns currently and in the past. Trying my best to give good advice and share my limited experiences that might inspire the young mentees. I also like working with young engineers and interns on my projects. Coaching them and able to see them grow is quite fulfilling.

What led you to your current profession?

Right after graduation from college, I first joined a well-known design institute as an estimator with emphasis on infrastructures in Shanghai. As time passed by in my first two years of career, my passion about buildings, especially high-rise buildings, grew stronger and enough that I decided to come back to buildings instead. I then did grad school back in structural engineering. I was amazed by all kinds of fantastic projects done by LERA at the time and was lucky enough to become a member of LERA starting as a summer intern in 2014.

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