



## **2021 Women in CRE: Marlee Finestone, SWBR**

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Name: Marlee Finestone

Title: Landscape Designer

Company Name: SWBR

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

One standout project for me in the last year was the Robert's Wesleyan College Community Engagement Center. College and University projects are always very exciting to work on because every school is unique and has their own student and faculty culture. I enjoyed learning (and reminiscing) about student life on campus and how to incorporate certain elements into the design. The Community Engagement Center will provide a central meeting space for student groups, commuters, adult students, and the community.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession?

Landscape architects serve a vital role in the creation of strong, vibrant communities by placing emphasis on the importance of the public realm. A high-quality public environment can have a significant impact on the social and economic life of an urban center, big or small. These spaces have a major part to play in the character, attractiveness, and success of any town or community. Access to well-maintained parks and green spaces can help to improve our physical and mental health simply by encouraging us to walk more, keep active, or simply enjoy a green and natural environment. I enjoy working directly with the communities these public spaces will serve to ensure they get exactly what they want and need.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles?

Effective team communication is key. At times a project conflict or obstacle may seem overwhelming and make the project seem unattainable. I feel that good communication is the crucial component of making goals reachable and reducing and diffusing conflict. It also allows everyone to have a voice and feel heard. Another way I try and help motivate other teammates is by staying positive and approachable.

How do you advocate for your fellow women in real estate?

One way in which I advocate for fellow women in the profession is by encouraging other women in the workplace to speak up and amplify their thoughts and ideas. It's motivating and empowering knowing that your opinion, thoughts, and voice matter.

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

“The Death and Life of Great American Cities” by Jane Jacobs, “The Walkable City” by Jeff Speck, and “Cities for People” by Jan Gehl are all noteworthy readings. One of my favorite films about urban planning that I recommend to anyone (designer or not) is “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces,” a 1979 documentary by William Whyte. It explores the successes and failures of public spaces in New York City. The film is visibly dated, but it’s still very relevant to any public realm space. It shows how city planners and designers can encourage and allow the creation of spaces people will actually want to use.

Why should women consider a career in commercial real estate and related services?

There are so many reasons why women should consider a career in landscape architecture! Not only is it a creative career path, but it is also so versatile. Landscape architects are trained with a wide range of knowledge that gives us several different areas of employment opportunity. This can include the design and planning of parks and recreation, urban design, educational campuses, wildlife conservation reserves, stream restoration, residential design, senior living campuses, and so much more. If you have an appreciation for nature, a creative flair, and a passion for the environment, landscape architecture might be an ideal career option to consider.

Tell us a thing or two about you that is NOT on your resume or LinkedIn profile?

I grew up playing ice hockey and was the only girl on an all-boys team for many years before joining a travel girls’ team at age 13. Being the only girl on a boys’ hockey team is apt to get extra attention, like it or not. The experience taught me many valuable life lessons at a young age, including commitment, perseverance, and teamwork.

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