



2022 Women in Construction: Gabriela Fernandez, Lilker Associates Consulting Engineers, P.C.

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Name: Gabriela Fernandez

Title: Senior Designer, Plumbing/Fire Protection Engineer

Company Name: Lilker Associates Consulting Engineers, P.C.

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months?

Mandarin Oriental Hotel 685 Fifth Ave.—a 29-floor residential building with the first four floors existing—was my first big project. It was challenging working with the existing conditions while designing a new building. I got to design all the plumbing systems: Water, sanitary, storm and gas—which we don't have the opportunity to do on smaller projects. I'm currently working on PS105 which is my first new school and Revit project. The SCA Design Standards are a bit different than the private sector and it's been an interesting experience designing on this project and practicing my Revit skills.

What advice would you offer to other women getting into the construction industry?

Do not be afraid or intimidated to work with men. Build confidence and work hard. View challenges as opportunities. As a female in construction, there is opportunity to pave the way for future women in the industry. Find a mentor. "Empowered women empower women."

Why should women consider a career in construction?

A sense of accomplishment. The construction industry can give you a unique sense of achievement. Nothing beats the feeling of being able to build something from the ground up. It helps to change perceptions and culture, since today's culture still looks at construction as an overly male-dominated industry. Clearly, the industry needs to work to address this gender imbalance, and fundamental changes will be needed to make a career in construction more appealing to women. Diversity inspires and encourages growth. Diversity within the workplace helps inspire new ideas that encourage company growth.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you?

My family, my dad, aunt and sister. Almost everyone in my family works in the construction business, doing exactly what I do: Excellent plumbing and fire protection engineering design.

Who within your own firm has helped you succeed within the construction industry?

I have to give great thanks to Alina Zaccarelli and Julio Crespo who have helped me during my professional career at Lilker.

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