



2022 Women in Construction: Nelya Sachakova, RKTB Architects

March 22, 2022 - Spotlights



Name: Nelya Sachakova, AIA, CPHD

Title: Architect

Company Name: RKTB Architects

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

In Jamaica, Queens, construction is about to start on a 3-K school facility that stands out among the projects I've worked on in the last year or so. The RKTB team has designed an interior renovation of a former gym space in a large retail center to create a new 3-K for All facility for pre-schoolers. The big challenges included working within an existing space with multiple tenants, paired with abbreviated timelines for design and construction documentation. Meeting the challenge required dedication and a strong, unified team effort. But no matter the challenges, it is always gratifying to work on projects like these that serve the community, which is one of the reasons I'm glad to work at RKTB.

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

I have been lucky enough to have a great mentor here at RKTB: Albert Aronov, AIA, heads up the firm's work on all K-12 school projects, and helps me daily to succeed. Sometimes that support comes in the form of just answering my questions, while other times it's taking the time to sketch out a solution together, or discuss construction processes that I may not yet be familiar with. He has also taught me how to manage relationships and expectations among architects, clients, contractors, and other stakeholders. His encouragement is not just about developing design and construction skills: it's also how to lead, and how to run a successful design firm.

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

When entering an industry like architecture and construction, which has a reputation as being male-dominated, women (especially young women) may experience feeling a lack of confidence, and hesitation to speak up. I would advise all of them not to hesitate to ask questions, because asking may start a conversation that leads to new ideas. If you stay silent, no one can benefit from your unique perspective and skillsets. It's important to remember that your contributions may be more valuable to the design and construction processes than anyone realizes, leading to better outcomes for clients and end-users. Be open to learning as much as possible and embrace new opportunities if given the chance, and never hesitate to enlist support and help from others.

Starting out in the architecture/construction business, who empowered you?

There are too many teachers and mentors to name here, though I'm certainly grateful to the principals at RKTB for their daily contributions to my professional empowerment. But most empowering is just knowing that every day I make contributions to the shape and evolution of New York City's fabric, especially those contributions that support the city's ambition to reduce carbon emissions from buildings.

Why should women consider a career in architecture/construction?

There is a great sense of satisfaction in seeing your designs come to fruition and emerge in the real world as built environments. There are not many other careers in which one's work produces a tangible result of this kind. Additionally, AEC professions provide great opportunities for women to take part in influencing and creating the environments we all live and work in. Having a voice in the process matters. I would encourage people of all genders and backgrounds to be involved, in order

to ensure equity in design. Diversity is an asset to any industry, and the building sector is no exception.

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