



2023 Women in Construction: Saranya Kanagarai, Consigli Construction Co.

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Saranya Kanagaraj
Assistant Project Manager

In the past year, what project or accomplishment are you most proud of? In the past year, the project I am most proud of is the Bronx High School of Science The Stanley Manne '52 Science Institute. The whole intent of this project was to create a research building for students to continue their long-term science projects. This was the first project I worked on and was hugely rewarding. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, I could give tours to students and felt a sense of accomplishment showing all the incredible equipment and the light-filled classrooms.

Which professional associations or organizations would you recommend to women who are starting out in the AEC industry? I am currently a member of the American Institution of Architects (AIA) and licensed. Even if you are not, this group has some significant events to attend, such as workshops or lecture series. This industry can be vast, which is a great way to find other people who align with your interests. I am also a member of Urban Land Institute (ULI), a great interdisciplinary organization.

What was a pivotal point in your career? A pivotal point in my career would be switching from architecture to construction. I worked in architecture for five years and was licensed, but I began to explore other career paths. I have always enjoyed working as part of a design team and the collaboration that happens, but once Covid hit, I lost that. I connected with a construction professional who persuaded me to choose my current position. They explained how quickly I would learn through the hands-on experience this industry offers. I definitely doubted myself, but this has been a risk worth taking.

How can AEC companies recruit more women? I think there are many careers with linear paths that start in school. For me, I learned about my job when someone told me about it. I believe there needs to be more visibility starting at an earlier stage. More people need to know this is a job, and I don't totally know what that looks like. AEC companies should attend more career fairs, recruit candidates from other industries, and raise awareness sooner.

What is your favorite building in New York? I have two favorite buildings. The first one is the Newton Wastewater Treatment Plant. I walk past this on my walk to work every day, and I love the way it looks. I also like the way it does not hide what it is. My other favorite building is the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice in Midtown Manhattan. This building was built in the 1960s and has a beautiful plant-filled space. I like how it was designed to give those who work there a sense of social responsibility.