



2023 Women in Construction: Carla Giarrusso, Suffolk Construction

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Carla Giarrusso
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In the past year, what project or accomplishment are you most proud of? This year my team and I completed a 1 million s/f warehouse in Maspeth, Queens. We finished the project under budget and ahead of schedule, two accomplishments that should be celebrated in the construction industry. I am most proud, however, of the relationship we were able to establish with the client. On a personal level, I have recently been promoted to project executive at Suffolk Construction, and I am looking forward to leading more successful projects in the future.

How can AEC companies recruit more women? AEC companies can recruit more women by making long term commitments and being intentional. I have seen organizations commit to hiring women and fail to execute on the promise or hire women for administrative roles only. Until there are more women in STEM programs, companies must make a real effort to seek them out and it will be worth it. At Suffolk, we have a Career Start Program that engages with young professionals out of college and places them into referral programs, rotations and various other positions where they can figure out what they are interested in.

Which professional associations or organizations would you recommend to women who are starting out in the AEC industry? I would say get involved with REBNY. They are making a big push towards inclusivity and diversity, not just talking about it, but taking concrete action. Last year, I was one of the REBNY Leadership Fellows, a new program that is specifically designed to help promote a diverse and equal workplace. Another organization to get involved with is NEW (Non-Traditional Employment for Women). It is a great organization that promotes women in the building trades and provides training, education and healthcare to ensure their success. Professional Women in Construction is another organization I would highly recommend.

What was a pivotal point in your career? A pivotal point in my career was breaking away from my architectural background. I have a bachelors of architecture and worked several years in an architectural firm in Boston. I gradually began to realize that I enjoyed being on site more than being behind a desk. Often there is a disconnect between what is shown on paper and how things are actually built and that problem solving intrigued me, so I began to seek out opportunities in the construction industry. It is different from where I started, but I have no regrets.

What is your favorite building in New York? Although it is not a building, I love Rockefeller Center. I have many fond memories of going to see the tree during the holidays, a tradition my family still does to this day. It's such an amazing, layered urban space that has stood the test of time. When I was applying to architecture schools, I submitted a portfolio of photographs I took throughout New York City, the statue of Atlas in front of 45 Rock was on the first page. Fast forward to today, and my office is located in Rock Center. It feels like a full-circle moment.