



Executive of the Month: Aditya Shah, real estate developer: Addressing New York City's housing crisis with cutting-edge engineering solutions

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Aditya Shah

New York City is notoriously expensive, with housing costs being the primary culprit. The situation is so bad that since 2021, housing expenses have consumed over 40% of household budgets, mirroring pre-pandemic levels. Despite creating nearly 1.2 million jobs in the last decade — only 400,000 housing units have been built. Affordable housing vacancy is now at a historic low, leading to New Yorkers experiencing a housing crisis as with this year's rent prices multiplying seven times over actual salaries.

Aditya Shah leading Vikrant Contracting and Builders Inc. from Queens, has taken the initiative to address the housing crisis here using his innovative engineering expertise and construction experience. With a focus on multifamily projects, he has dedicated his career to creating quality, affordable housing that contributes to the overall growth and development of the city. His deep understanding of the construction process, coupled with his firsthand experience, allowed him to master the complexities of real estate development, transforming him into a leader in the field.

Shah's work focuses on multifamily housing projects; 8811 179th Pl., the 49-unit 8-story affordable housing in Queens. This project may not individually offer a complete solution to the city's housing crisis. It does, however, play a significant role in easing the shortage of affordable housing

in a city where the vacancy rate has dropped to 1.4% and the average rent exceeds \$4,000 per month. His projects are not just about constructing buildings; they are about working towards solving New York's housing crisis through affordable housing. The Queens project by Shah utilized the benefits of programs such as the 421-A, now replaced by 485-X.

The program offers developers with tax incentives in exchange for offering a set number of units at below-market rents. This move contributes to a more equitable housing landscape in New York City, wherein the projects benefit both the investors and the people of New York.

Pioneering Techniques Over Conventional Underpinning Methods

Shah exemplifies through his projects how innovative and proactive measures can be used to safely navigate complex challenges during the initial construction phase. Given New York City's high population density, safeguarding adjacent structures during excavation was paramount. The proximity of the MTA Train Station further complicated using conventional underpinning methods.

Vikrant Contracting and Builders Inc. under the leadership of Shah had to ensure the structural integrity of surrounding buildings, without risking any harm to New York's population. They decided to try a novel and pioneering, little-used excavation strategy. They decided to use the little-known engineering solution known as secant pile walls to ensure the structural integrity of surrounding buildings. This advanced technique involved drilling deep piles into the ground to create a robust and impermeable barrier that works in two ways.

It effectively prevents soil erosion and protects against possible structural failure. The successful execution of this critical phase underscores his technical expertise and essential leadership acumen.

Combatting New York's Housing Crisis with Effective Cost Reduction Strategies

The prices for essential construction materials such as steel, concrete, and lumber have surged significantly over the past few years. Shah's commitment to construction management skills is evident in his proactive approach to reducing construction costs. For example, instead of hiring a general contractor to oversee projects, he utilizes his expertise and previous work experience as a project manager to get directly involved in the management and procurement of materials, which traditionally rests in the hands of the general contractor.

As a consequence of being a self-performing general contractor, instead of procuring materials through a middleman, he buys material directly from global suppliers at reduced wholesale rates. This small tweak in his construction process leads to a substantial drop in construction costs which reflects upon lower rental rates. He utilizes 3D clash detection models and techniques during the pre-construction phase which helps avoid expensive errors made by the design team before construction starts.

AI Technology for Proactive Safety Measures

Shah's adherence to strict safety standards in all his projects further demonstrates his dedication to sustainability. According to the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) 2023 Construction Safety Report, seven construction workers died due to construction-related incidents in 2023. The report also shows a 25% increase in reported worker injuries, with 841 incidents and 692 injuries in 2023.

Shah believes that real estate development should not happen at the cost of human life and has zero tolerance for violating safety protocols. He not only adheres to safety protocols required by agencies but also takes proactive measures to ensure his team's safety. He uses the help of AI software to identify fall prevention errors, ensure compliance, and also reduce the chances of accidents occurring.

Shaping a Sustainable City with Affordable Housing Initiatives

While New York City is often synonymous with luxury real estate, the pressing need for affordable housing demands a shift in focus. Developers like Shah have the potential to play a pivotal role in addressing this critical issue by prioritizing projects that directly tackle the housing shortage. Although no single development can fully resolve the crisis, each successful project brings the city closer to building a more equitable and accessible New York for all. It is also known that Shah and his team is in the acquisition process of a property in Queens for the development of 21 units, proving his commitment to resolving New York's housing crisis.

The true measure of success for developers should not be solely defined by financial returns, but by the tangible impact that their work has on the community. By consistently delivering high-quality, affordable housing, developers can make a significant contribution to the creation of an inclusive and sustainable city.

Through innovative approaches and a commitment to meeting the needs of all residents, developers hold the key to transforming New York's housing landscape and ensuring a brighter future for its inhabitants.

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