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Where do you find inspiration for the future of your business? - by Steven Haines and Maureen Funke

April 20, 2018 - Connecticut

Steven Haines
BVH Integrated Services

Maureen Funke
greenbox-is

Where do you find inspiration for the future of your business? If you are looking at your competition, you are likely already behind. Some of us spend time trying to understand how our kids view the world and consider what they would do. I read an article recently about how some companies are looking to gain insight from fantastical ideas posited in science fiction literature of the past. For the

past eight years a number of local firms have relied on the Construction Institute's (CI) Visionaries Forum to offer insight into how the most innovative and forward leaning thinkers are carrying their firms into the future.

The CI's Visionaries Forum celebrates innovation during an event that draws together pioneers who are shaping the future of design, construction, and management for our A/E/C/O industry. The CI has a long standing tradition of bringing visionaries together to break molds, to blow your minds and to bring innovative ideas to a regularly sold out audience from all aspects of the industry around the region. Our former guests have included scientists, inventors, end users, architects, engineers, constructors, manufacturers, software developers and strategists in an expansive collection of industries and this year is no exception. The 9th Annual Visionaries Forum to be held on May 17 brings a diverse and deeply knowledgeable group of thinkers together to impart their wisdom up on us and share how we may also dare to be so visionary in all of our lives.

On a topic that is relevant to all of us here in Southern New England we will hear from Gregory Sauter, founder of Smart City Works. Smart City Works is bringing innovation and commercialization to infrastructure. Greg and his team drive success for their clients through advancing leadership and outcomes through executive and organizational transformation.

Joining us from a company that is a global innovator, part of the bedrock of the Connecticut manufacturing industry and transforming itself in real time through the Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence in downtown Hartford, Sudhi Bangalore is Stanley Black & Decker's vice president of Industry 4.0. Bangalore's role involves leading Stanley Black & Decker's automation efforts through the collaboration of many tools including internet of things, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, 3-D printing, robotics and advanced materials.

Getting it all done and using technology to drive his company forward is Chris Mayer, EVP and chief innovation officer at Suffolk Construction Company, Inc. Mayer's unique perspective of construction comes through the publishing and the digital media industry. Mayer brings his varied experience with inspiring change and transforming traditional business models into the digital age to his role at Suffolk and oversees innovative initiatives through execution and assessment to achieve safer, high quality, and more affordable buildings.

Holly McNamara, selectman, civil engineer, project manager, brings a backbone of engineering education together with her political savvy to help eastern Massachusetts think about a transportation system that is not just for sci-fi movies. In addition to her other responsibilities, she is president of Hyperloop Massachusetts, one of the 35 semi-finalists chosen from the 2,600 applicants for the Hyperloop One Global Challenge (now Virgin Hyperloop One)!

Our visionaries this year cover many industries including infrastructure, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and "Frog"! A "Frog" is a Flexible Response to Ongoing Growth, a way for architects, builders, and owners to create great buildings through a standardized set of building components. Marijke Smit is senior vice president, business development at Project Frog Inc. Smit has lead the way to define and expand Project Frog's component building solutions nationally in the education,

civic and retail sectors.

Please join us! This year's Visionaries Forum will be held on May 17, at the Spotlight Theatres in Hartford. You can find out more and register for the event at <http://construction.org/event/VisionariesForum9>

Steven Haines is the director of technical operations at BVH Integrated Services and Maureen Funke is the director of new business development at greenbox-is, both companies are members of the Construction Institute, Hartford, Conn.

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