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2022 Women in Construction: Gabrielle Aitcheson, Director of Sustainability at ICON Architecture

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Gabrielle Aitcheson

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? As ICON Architecture's new director of sustainability, I've spent the last year revitalizing and reconstructing our Sustainability Action Plan. Focused on resiliency, innovation and equity, the plan ensures all staff members have the resources and knowledge they need to be advocates for our clients, communities and climate. Being thorough and intentional during design allows for a smooth construction process, where we can push the boundaries of construction techniques and high-performance building, and work towards our mission to improve environmental and social resilience.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you? Working on Passive House projects with contractors who had never built them before made our relationship much more collaborative. It leveled the playing field and allowed us to learn from each other and work together to find the best method to make the details work. Having an equal voice as well as room to make mistakes was very empowering.

Within your firm, who has helped you succeed within the industry? How have they helped you? My colleague, associate principal Michelle Apigian, has been a great partner and champion as I established myself as her co-sustainability leader at ICON and ultimately director of sustainability. She helps me see the bigger picture when I am lost in the details, introduced me to Passive House and gave me the room to grow and learn. She also showed me how important it is to be a partner on the construction site –we all want to get the building built, so it's better to focus on the path forward and simply take mistakes as lessons learned for the next project.

When you're not busy, what is your go to book or podcast to help you unwind? NPR's Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me! to help current events feel less depressing.

What tips or advice would you offer to other women who are considering entering the construction industry? It doesn't have to be a man's world! Find other women and empower each other, share your perspective whenever possible

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