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2022 Women in Commercial Real Estate: Marija Ilic, J. Garland Enterprises LLC

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Marija Ilic
Director of Architecture

What advice would you offer to women getting into the CRE industry?

Get in and stay in. Joining a CRE-focused organization of like-minded professionals helps us stay relevant and have some fun on the way. It is entrepreneurial, exciting, and unpredictable, but it provides a perfect complement to my personal and family life. We need women's voices to shape the real estate environment and every time you have uncertainties, think about who would and could do it better.

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months?

Affordability and sustainability are the two buzz words floating around. There is a lot of effort to achieve both in housing, but the actual process of getting there reveals many challenges that the building industry faces. Complicated and cumbersome permitting, lack in subject matter expertise, supply chain issues, and labor shortages are some factors that I believe currently affect every industry. I hope that we will see an uptick in mass timber use, and higher application of data and technology to compensate and address the challenges.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Joining Jonathan Garland Enterprises as Director of Architecture is one accomplishment that I'm most inspired by. As part of the firm management, I can fully utilize my experience and skills to expand and develop the vision that Jonathan created for JGE as a 100% Minority-Owned Business. Diversity is written all over our practice and reflects who we truly are. I enjoy mentoring and hope to spread enthusiasm to new generations of architects. We have talented staff, great clients, and amazing work. Entering the office full of smiling faces that greet me every morning, fuels the energy to achieve more and enjoy the process.

Are you part of any CRE organizations? How have they helped your professional development?

I am part of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and am an active participant in a number of its councils and programs, including the Women's Leadership Initiative, Housing and Economic Development, and the Urban Plan. Having responsible land development at its core value, ULI was an easy and obvious choice for me. Once I joined, the floodgates to opportunities opened! I was inspired by the variety of interests that could be fulfilled through the programs. And after being a good listener for a year, I realized that the real charm and inspiration were in taking an active role as a participant. That active participation led me to landing a co-chair position at WLI Council and developing an amazing network within the local CRE community.