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2024 Women in CRE: Cristina Zupcu, JGE Architecture + Design

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Cristina Zupcu
Director of Interior Design

What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of? Brookley Flats, a Jamaica Plain project which is being built. It is the largest affordable home ownership project in Boston; it is not every day that you hear an interior designer assisting with the finishes, lighting, and furniture on an affordable housing project and JGE made sure this can happen! While we had a tight budget, it didn't deter me from designing for the residents with a unique approach: introduced a fresh and playful color palette, variety of textures and personality that tell the story of the involved artists and community and chose durable materials and elements that will age gracefully.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in commercial real estate? Not everyone can easily envision a finalized interior when pointing to an empty core and shell space so to help our clients, brokers, landlords and future tenants with visualizing I often like to create a story which will turn into renderings, walk-through videos, concept boards or diagrammatic floor plans providing ideas and insights on what the space could turn out to be. If the story is captured well through the intent of the design, the empty space will turn into an exciting opportunity. The real estate market is dynamic, with trends and demands changing rapidly. The fast-paced nature of commercial real estate requires me to stay ahead of anticipated future needs. I meet this challenge by continually educating myself on the latest industry developments, attending industry events, integrating new products and listening intently to client's needs that not only meet current requests but are also adaptable to future changes.

What is your vision for the future of women in commercial real estate? I'm enchanted with the increasing number of female brokers, OPMs and construction project managers I see guiding clients with their projects. Women are taking on leadership roles, bringing fresh perspectives and driving innovation in the industry. What I would love to see more of are women that are developers or landlords helping shape the future of our industry.

What advice do you have for young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate? I read somewhere that the average person spends about 50% of their lifetime working. If you are going to spend so much precious time, make sure you enjoy what you are doing; that you are passionate about your industry no matter what it is. It is your passion that will help you get through stressful deadlines and help you face challenges.

- From your days in college build a strong network and maintain those relationships;
- Stay informed on what is happening in the market and what has and hasn't worked well in the past;
- Develop your own identity – what makes you stand out from others, what you bring to the table that others don't;

- No matter how many years you have in the industry, there is always something new to learn; embrace continuous learning; and
- Learn to negotiate and how to communicate efficiently and with charisma.

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