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## **Project REAP appoints Nash Laird as new executive director**

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Taneshia Nash Laird

Boston, MA Project REAP (Real Estate Associate Program) has appointed Taneshia Nash Laird, as the organization's new executive director.

Founded in 1998, REAP employs education, mentorships and corporate partnerships to amplify inclusivity and impact in the commercial real estate (CRE) industry from entry-level through the C-suite. Nash Laird, a distinguished graduate of the Project REAP Academy, steps into this role following a national search conducted by global executive search firm Stanton Chase.

For a quarter of a century, Project REAP has empowered professionals of color to transition into and build successful careers in commercial real estate, an industry historically lacking diversity. With programs in nine U.S. markets - Atlanta, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas, Los Angeles, Kansas City, New York City, and Washington, D.C - and a virtual program commenced in 2020, the nonprofit REAP has successfully graduated more than 2,000 REAP Academy fellows since its founding. A 2023 impact report found that 71% of alumni have transitioned into or advanced their careers in the CRE industry. Additionally, REAP alumni have seen significant salary increases, with a 33% rise for those earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000 and a 14% rise for executive-level roles.

Nash Laird said, "As a proud REAP Academy alumna, I have long admired the organization's work and dedication to diversifying the commercial real estate industry. I look forward to building a team and collaborating with the board of directors, our corporate partners, and donors to lead REAP into a new era of impact in the \$20 trillion commercial real estate industry." She added that she is making Boston Project REAP's national headquarters and will admit a cohort of fellows from the city.

"We are delighted to welcome Taneshia as our new executive director," said Mike Kercheval, chair of the board of directors. "Her passion, strategic vision, and impressive background make her the perfect leader to advance our mission and drive our organization forward. We are confident that under her guidance, Project REAP will continue to make a significant difference in the industry and the lives of those we serve."

Nash Laird brings a wealth of experience in community development, strategic business growth, and nonprofit management.

As president and CEO of Newark Symphony Hall in Newark, NJ, she revitalized the nearly insolvent c. 1925 performing arts center, one of the oldest and largest in the State. She doubled its earned revenue by having it serve as a TV and film production location, raised over \$15 million for its historic preservation and expansion, and created new cultural programming and workforce development programs targeting the city's predominantly Black and Hispanic residents. Having cemented her national reputation as a leader in culturally-driven redevelopment in communities of color, Nash Laird was recruited to Boston in 2022 as the inaugural president and CEO helming the ground-up development of the \$35 million Greater Roxbury Arts & Cultural Center which highlights Black contributions to the arts. Nash Laird previously co-founded the entertainment venue MIST

Harlem in New York City and was a New Jersey municipal and state economic development official. She currently serves on the board of the nonprofit National Independent Venue Foundation.

Nash Laird succeeds interim executive director G. Lamont Blackstone, previously the organization's board chair. The board thanked Blackstone for his service, filling in after the departure of REAP's previous executive director, Manikka Bowman.

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