

WESTERN REAL ESTATE BUSINESS

CREW 2019: WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

WREB recently sat down with Holly Neber, CEO of AEI Consultants in Walnut Creek, Calif., and the new president of CREW to discuss her hopes for the organization in the upcoming year.

By Nellie Day

Can you tell us about your experience with CREW in 2018?

It was a wonderful experience for me to be involved in CREW in 2018. The culture of the CREW network board is extremely focused on the mission of supporting one another and making sure its message is transmitted throughout the organization. That message revolves around transforming the industry through advancing women by having each other's backs and supporting one another.

What is the one thing you hope members took away from their involvement with CREW last year?

I think we always have to be learning. That is really important in today's day and age. Focusing on professional development and remaining inspired are also great. Just keep learning about our profession. One of the great things about CREW is we have attorneys, lenders, developers, builders, all these different sectors of commercial real estate coming together with one conversation. Always be learning new things both on the professional devel-

opment side, as well as in terms of the latest industry news.

What are your hopes for the organization this year?

I'm looking forward to several initiatives rolling out. We're launching a new internship platform for industry partners to more readily connect with those wishing to enter the commercial real estate field, not only targeting women but inclusive of all types of diversity. We're looking to influence the diversity of talent entering the field. As a CEO, one of the biggest challenges is finding and recruiting that talent. I know we can be that same type of effective partner for other business leaders, so we're launching a corporate board training program for senior executive women. It's great timing with the new law signed in California that requires publicly held companies to have at least one female on their boards of directors by the end of the year. The leadership certificate program will focus on negotiation tactics, executive presence, and will be led by professors from MIT and

Harvard. It will help groom the future leaders as they pursue professional development and form business connections.

How is this business atmosphere different for women in the wake of the MeToo movement?

Talent acquisition and retention is one of the biggest challenges everyone in this industry faces. Companies in our industry want to reflect their customer base in the communities where they operate. This is why we want to attract the best talent, and why we want our teams to be diverse. We know diverse teams perform at a higher level. CREW can connect companies with talented individuals. Those who join CREW get additional career development and training that can help them nurture business relationships.

What commercial real estate trends were on your radar last year?

Technology is affecting everything. We are all trying to figure out what data is most useful to our customers

and how to give that to them in a meaningful way. At conferences nowadays, almost all panel discussions end up discussing technology at one point or another.

What is the biggest trend you expect to be following in 2019?

The conversation about how quickly the industrial and logistic spaces are evolving. It's making design decisions very challenging because developers want to build something that won't be obsolete in the near future, but change is happening so rapidly. The question is how do you build automation and robotics when technology is changing constantly? The expectation for timing and delivery is also changing and compressing all the time. In the past, next-day delivery wasn't common but our behavior is changing, which means our opportunities are changing. ■



Neber