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ULI Fall Meeting 2017
Prologis Scholarship Essay

When I returned home from the ULI Fall meeting, I received an email from my mentor, Marty Jones, in which she said she always leaves ULI meetings both “inspired and exhausted.” It was the perfect summary of how I felt about the meeting as well. Through the week, I was inspired by the many professionals I met, local projects I saw with the Urban Revitalization Council, and the thought provoking discussions I witnessed at the conference center.

It was an honor to be selected as a Prologis Scholarship recipient, and meeting other scholarship winners was a great introduction to the meeting as a whole. The WLI Steering Committee meeting on Monday afternoon provided a great opportunity to hear representatives from various WLIs talk about successful events and initiatives and enumerate specific goals. I left the meeting with several points to bring back to WNY, and over the past few weeks, we started a local women’s speaker list. Other common topics for WLI programming included “how to tell your story” and networking strategies, both of which will be welcome additions to our local endeavors. It was also great to meet women from Pittsburgh and Toronto, two relatively close WLIs that might provide opportunity for collaboration in the future. Our YLG groups have hosted exchanges in these cities, and it would be great to continue the relationship through WLI.

In addition to these lessons and ideas from other WLIs, it was nice to hear from Ralph Boyd, the ULI CEO of the Americas, about broader context of where WLI fits into ULI and the strategic plan in progress. Similar themes resonated at the WLI breakfast on Tuesday, including the new ULI Navigator tool and additional product councils, each intended to engage more members in active roles and leadership positions.

I spent the majority of my time in LA with the Urban Revitalization Council, which had two days of tours and events. Despite the heat wave, it was great to walk and see projects underway and use them as launching points for discussing broader trends and challenges in city development. In addition to meeting people from around the country with varying expertise, I particularly appreciated the attention to social justice and infrastructure themes. The city’s MyFigueroa project (which aims to reorient the thoroughfare to a more place based street), the Arts District, Skid Row Housing Trust, and University Village at USC offered a wide variety of case studies. Without much prior knowledge of Los Angeles, I left with a better awareness of the city and some of the issues that planners and developers are facing.

Overall, I left with the competing feelings that I had done so much and yet I still wasn’t able to attend every interesting session or event-- a testament to the conference organizers and participants who provided such a robust and interesting array of activities and speakers!