

Kirsten Ekdahl Hull – Personal Reflections from 2014 ULI Fall Meeting

At the Urban Land Institute (ULI) fall meeting in New York this October, I was reminded again as to why I, like so many others, love to visit New York and why it was the perfect spot for the meeting this year. The scale, energy, and vibrancy are awe-inspiring and there was no better place to witness that than at 4 World Trade Center (WTC), hearing about the redevelopment of the World Trade site by Silverstein Properties' Marty Burger. Thanks to the Women's Leadership Initiative Scholarship, I had the opportunity to not only soak in the 360 degree views of the city, but also hear directly from Mr. Burger about the monumental task of rebuilding and creating a new neighborhood where one did not previously exist. Hearing Mr. Burger talk about the process they went through to bid, scope, finance, design, build, and lease all of the WTC buildings and the challenges associated with the same, I was reminded and inspired by a trait shared by all successful developers – courage. Sitting there amongst all of the other WLI and ULI scholarship awardees and student groups, I reflected upon how much I admire those who are willing to take the big risks and make the jump – nothing truly great would have been or will be built without these great builders taking those calculated risks.

On a more personal level, one of the most impactful and actionable pieces of information I took with me from the fall meeting was from the Leadership day at the "Gen X: Next Generation of Leadership" panel. One of the speakers shared that every five years he gathers a group of advisors both from inside and outside of his company to assess how he was doing both professionally and personally – what a simple yet impactful idea to gain perspective and push yourself to grow. I have already put the wheels in motion to act upon this strategy for my own personal development and that has more value to me than any other sessions and events I attended throughout the week.

While I learned about incredible and complex deals on Product Council day and on Deals Day at Javits, what I will take home with me more than anything is what I learned about myself and what type of developer I want to be. Thank you again to ULI and specifically to WLI – my involvement in both groups continues to help me grow, learn, be inspired and find my own path to building lasting and vibrant communities at home in Chicago.