

The 2012 ULI Fall Meeting, “What’s Next,” offered great insight on real estate and development trends as well as predictions on all land use sectors. The sessions offered in-depth discussions on standard development sectors such as office, multi-family, hotel, and others, but also on unique topics including:

- underperforming secondary assets in the retail sector
- the new trend of creative office developments
- how banks package capital risk
- new 330 s.f. housing units in urban areas

The keynote sessions provided the opportunity to hear from key global thought leaders; while the general sessions delivered an interactive way to focus on individual project types and to learn more about specific development issues that cities and regions are grappling with. All the sessions enabled me to review and enhance my knowledge of city development patterns and learn how the real estate industry reacts to and influences those trends.

The Product Councils were one of the highlights of the week-long event. It was a truly amazing experience to have so many experts together in one room to share trends, challenge assumptions, and brainstorm new strategies.

The message I took away from the ULI Fall Meeting was “Collaborative Partnerships” - meaning pulling ourselves out of our silos—this definitely spoke to me as my daily work life is focused only on municipal projects. Because of this, it’s crucial for me to actively participate in ULI (at the local and national level) to interact with experts from other fields, and reengage and learn more about all types of development. The collaborative partnership lessons I learned from the Fall Meeting were motivating and will enable me to expand my multi-disciplinary focus.

The Fall Meeting emphasized there is no other way to be successful than through partnerships. Projects highlighted throughout the sessions showed this very effectively. Two in particular stand out: NE Denver Educational Corridor and Union Station.

- The NE Denver Education Corridor project shows the successful link between the private and public sectors. The project developer led an initiative to improve the schools in the district where he was building large housing projects by working with community stakeholders, educational foundations and the local school district. He helped to improve the community’s educational facilities based on the belief that “you can’t have a successful business in a failing society.”

- To facilitate the Union Station redevelopment, a new authority was created merging public and private and giving them shared responsibilities for developing the infrastructure to kick off the project. The key message from this project was to learn from your failures, go back to the drawing table, and build a new vision.

The Fall Meeting exceeded my expectations, giving me the opportunity to meet, interact, and share ideas and project issues with leaders in all fields, and in particular through the WLI scholarship, with amazing and accomplished women.

WLI achieved its Fall Meeting goals by first, assigning a Mentor, who was not only an expert in her field but who was experienced in attending ULI events. She gave sound advice as to the best way to get the most out of the event and introduced me to many great connections – people from diverse fields, expertise, and various regions of the country. This produced a ripple effect as those people then also served as mentors, providing guidance and sharing their knowledge and expertise.

Second, we were put in touch with the movers and shakers in the real estate industry. The Game Changers session allowed us access to successful women as they told their career stories and gave insight into what they see as the key issues of the future. The leadership advice they offered, which I have brought back into my daily project implementation efforts, includes:

- Strike a balance between pushing when necessary, but not to the point of losing support for your efforts
- Find your passion and be tenacious
- Surround yourself with strong advisors
- Look outside your field, and comfort zone, to find inspiration for innovation

The WLI Mentorship structure allowed me to be more connected and engaged than I had anticipated. I expected to be able to tap into expertise during presentations, but the connections I made gave me the opportunity to engage in interactive conversation, to share ideas, and to learn from high-level experts in their fields.

The 2012 ULI Fall Meeting surpassed my expectations--the value I gained from it has driven me to find ways to increase my participation in ULI Chicago and ULI national, in particular for the upcoming 2013 Fall Meeting in Chicago.