

2016 ULI Fall Meeting Essay  
WLI Prologis Scholarship  
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Attending the Urban Land Institute Fall Meeting in Dallas, Texas, as a WLI Prologis Scholarship Recipient was an honor and an impressive experience. The week offered a wide variety of events ranging from women-focused meetings and presentations to Dallas area project tours and discussions on national industry trends. Being matched with a woman mentor and joining her Product Council for presentations, tours, and networking were unique opportunities. The week's events provided inspiration, insights, and new industry contacts to bring back to my home turf.

It was appropriate that my first official event was attending the WLI Steering Committee meeting. I was immediately overwhelmed by the caliber of high-level women professionals at the meeting. The sense of shared pride for the strides made by WLI since its inception only a handful years ago was palpable; progress made through increased number of women in ULI Product Councils, increased presence of women ULI leaders, and completing global research initiatives on women in the workplace in our industries. The number of women leaders in the ULI organization, especially at the top level, is evidence of WLI's efforts. Furthermore, all of these leaders were present at the meeting and engaged in continuing the dialogue of advancing women in our industry.

One of the biggest take-aways from the week, and my personal favorite, was hearing candid advice from these successful, powerful female role models, especially my WLI mentor whom I had the pleasure of getting to know over the course of several days. To receive sincere insights for how to best navigate an advancing career path in a male-dominated industry while balancing family, work, and community involvement was invaluable. Some of the best comments were: women advancement and equality is a huge elephant to eat so take a bite somewhere and take steps to move the dial, no matter how small; advocate for yourself and find others who will advocate for you, especially when you are not in the room; life begins at the end of your comfort zone so take risks and ask for "stretch" assignments; women are good at holding themselves to a higher standard but don't dwell on the mistakes, learn from it and move past them; create a five-year career growth plan and do periodic realistic assessments, if you are not making progress or getting the opportunities to match your plan, consider a new job or company; and, be your unique self and make your greatest assets visible to others.

True to ULI's reputation, the Fall Meeting delivered a well-organized and educational range of industry topics, along with fun and productive networking events. I enjoyed walking in downtown Dallas, touring its newest development projects, and seeing its revival first-hand. I attended sessions covering the global capital markets, retrofitting suburban office parks, strategies for urban multi-family residential, and new trends and innovations in real estate. The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Product Council presented the latest in federal funding programs, TOD case studies, and a tour of a TOD in Richardson that is anchored by State Farm's newest office location. The TOD Product Council reception and dinner allowed me to connect with experts involved with TOD projects from around the country.

After a week filled with such worthwhile programming, the Fall Meeting culminated in a memorable, funny and heartwarming interview with President George W. Bush. He spoke candidly about his experiences as President, the difficult decisions he had to make, his team and confidantes. Bush shared his passion for his and Laura's current causes, especially advocating for our veterans, and his new hobby of painting. As if Bush, himself, wasn't impressive enough, I was so glad that ULI chose a woman, Trish Healy, ULI Americas Chair, to share the stage with him and help him share these stories with us. Trish did an incredible job representing our industry, ULI, and the many women WLI is charged with supporting. The week came full circle for me by beginning with an overview of WLI's initiatives to advance women and ending with the promotion and prime visibility of such an inspiring, female ULI and WLI real estate leader.