



June 22, 2020

Hello everyone,

First, and always: I hope you and your families are all well and continue to be.

This has been an extraordinary year - and I'm stunned when I realize that we're barely halfway through it. I have been amazed by the way the CREW Chicago family has come together as we confront a pandemic and an unprecedented economic shut-down. So many of you have given freely of your time and talents to support your fellow CREW Chicago members however you can, and I'm so grateful for all of you.

But I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the other seismic shift happening in this country right now: the long overdue reckoning that we, as a nation, need to make with the racism that is sewn so deeply into the fabric of our everyday lives. We at CREW Chicago, an organization dedicated to supporting diversity and inclusion in the commercial real estate community, have worked hard to make inroads in an industry that is still overwhelmingly dominated by white men. But we are still an overwhelmingly white organization. While this is not the result of anything we have done consciously, it is nevertheless a situation that we have not addressed in any sort of focused way. And while our mission is to positively impact the commercial real estate industry by advancing the power and success of women, I believe that we can - and should - do more to ensure that the women we are advancing are a more diverse group.

To that end, we have undertaken a number of initiatives:

1. **Chi-AACRE Collaboration**. In an effort to broaden our reach to more members of the Black community, we have reached out to the leaders of Chi-AACRE (Chicago African-Americans in Commercial Real Estate). We are currently exploring with them a number of joint events and programs that will give us the opportunity to share experiences and ideas to create greater diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the commercial real estate industry. My hope is that these events will be the beginning of an ongoing collaboration that will mutually benefit both organizations; my goal is that this collaboration will lead to greater diversity in our membership and, even more importantly, among our chapter leaders.
2. **LPD Book Club**. CREW Chicago's 2020 Book Club, led by our Leadership and Professional Development Committee, will select a different book which will help us learn to be better allies. This is entirely consistent with being a "Courageous Leader", the theme selected months ago by the L&PD committee for this year's programs. The committee is considering a number of options and will announce their selection shortly.
3. **CREW Careers**. A longer term solution to the lack of diversity in CRE is to "feed the pipeline" by getting young women of color to consider careers in our industry. That has always been the purpose of our much-loved CREW Careers program which has worked for many years with girls from the Off the Street Club in West Garfield Park. Because we could not hold a program this year due to the pandemic, I have asked the committee chairs to reach out to the directors of the Club to consider other ways - consistent with our mission - in which we might support the girls who would have participated in this year's program. (Note that this would **not** take

the form of a general financial donation to the Club.) We will keep you posted on what they come up with.

4. **CRE Summit.** We are exploring the possibility of an industry-wide summit with other Chicago CRE organizations to discuss issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. We hope to have more to tell you about this very soon.

5. **DEI Task Force.** Addressing this issue in a meaningful way within our chapter will require committed and continuing efforts across the organization. Recognizing that fact, we have decided to create a task force whose sole responsibility will be to improve the diversity, equity and inclusion efforts of CREW Chicago. Exactly how this task force will be organized and led will be determined soon, but the Board has identified a few fundamental requirements: (a) it should include a member from each of our Standing Committees and at least one member of the Board, in addition to a few members from the organization at large; (b) it should be tasked with recommending actionable items that the chapter and our members can take over the near and long term to drive diversity, equity and inclusion in commercial real estate and in CREW Chicago; and (c) it should envision ways to measure our progress. I know that many of you have already been meeting informally to discuss these issues, and I hope you will consider applying for the task force. CREW Chicago would be grateful to have the benefit of your passion and creativity. We will share more information on how to join the task force in the coming days.

Like many of you, I've spent a lot of time in recent weeks thinking about the inequities in our industry. I don't imagine that the efforts outlined above will be easy or that they will immediately bear fruit. But I'm so encouraged by the willingness of the Board and our members to face this problem head-on. Knowing the incredible group of women and men who make up CREW Chicago, I have no doubt that we can make our chapter a more diverse and, thus, more powerful organization to advance the power and success of women in commercial real estate.

With love,



Sue Matejcek
2020 CREW Chicago President