

New England Real Estate Journal

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THE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE MEDIA SOURCE

SPOTLIGHT



ONES TO WATCH
INNOVATORS IN CRE



CHRISTEN ROBBINS, RA

Senior Project Manager; Principal
BL Companies

What innovation or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Innovation isn't always a priority, which may seem surprising coming from someone with a design background, but I'm always looking first and foremost at how to best serve my client and the people in their buildings. I've done a lot of work for higher education thinking about both the facility side and the student side. Innovative ideas sometimes lead to confusion. It's about identifying where innovation fits and what the client actually needs.



CHRIS BARAJAS

Staff Surveyor
Hancock Associates

Where do you see the biggest opportunities for innovation in CRE or your area of expertise?

I'm excited about the evolution of reality-capture technology and the opportunities it creates within surveying. GNSS, 3D scanning, and drones to enable us to collect more information efficiently, reduce errors, and improve deliverables. These technologies also create detail-rich products that are easier to interpret. Most exciting is their potential beyond traditional surveying, allowing professionals to apply their expertise in new ways, explore emerging markets, and expand the services and value they provide to clients.



ERIC EATON

Project Surveyor
Hancock Associates

Where do you see the biggest opportunities for innovation in CRE or your area of expertise?

I see a great opportunity for surveyors in commercial real estate as demand for housing and development grows while many experienced surveyors approach retirement. This creates a tremendous need for the next generation to enter the profession and learn from those who came before us. Technology can make us more efficient, but sound judgment, experience, and a strong understanding of surveying fundamentals remain essential to providing accurate and trusted services to the public.



QUINN LEVINE

Senior Architect
Bergmeyer

How is innovation changing the way you approach your work?

Rather than changing how I approach my work, innovation is the very core of it. It's also what I enjoy most about my day-to-day. In a field where new technology seems to emerge constantly, staying on top of it keeps my approach fresh and fulfilling. The challenge isn't a shortage of innovation, especially in design; it's filtering through what's out there to figure out what works for you and your firm. Of course, the flavor of the month is AI, and separating the noise from the improvements from the overpromises is what keeps me on my toes.



C. SCOTT SCHWEFEL

Attorney
Shipman, Shaiken & Schwefel, LLC

What innovation or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Property tax litigation tends to be reactive and owners typically challenge assessments after the fact, often without a valuation strategy behind them. I've built my practice around a different approach: treating valuation methodology as part of the initial litigation strategy, rather than as an afterthought. This consistently produces better outcomes. It's turned what many perceive as a niche practice into a serious litigation discipline, one that Fortune 100 companies trust a small firm to handle.



COURTNEY SIMMONS

Of Counsel
Davis Malm

Where do you see the biggest opportunities for innovation in CRE or your area of expertise?

A big opportunity for innovation in commercial real estate lies at the intersection of adaptive reuse and sustainability. Older industrial or commercial buildings facing rising vacancy rates can be repositioned as mixed-use, retail, or residential spaces that offer tremendous value. Emerging technologies—including AI-assisted due diligence, generative design, and modular construction—are accelerating these conversions, reducing timelines and costs, while breathing life into underutilized assets and enhancing community spaces designed for future needs.



JOSH WHITE

Associate Principal | Director of Operations
Margulies Perruzzi

Where do you see the biggest opportunities for innovation in CRE or your area of expertise?

One of the biggest opportunities I see in the commercial real estate industry is leveraging innovation to address the ongoing housing shortage in the region. This could be achieved through innovative zoning and land use regulations or by improving construction efficiency to reduce time to market. I'm excited to contribute to advancing thinking in these areas.



TERENCE STRETCH

Vice President – John B. Cruz Construction Company
Cruz Companies

What innovation or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Knowing that my engineering background and construction experience enable me to make a concrete, positive community impact has always given me pride and a deep sense of meaning throughout my career. Our current projects at Cruz Companies are diverse and complex, including historic school-to-residential conversions, new multi-phase mixed-use developments, and even the reconstruction of a former chain pharmacy into a much-needed neighborhood supermarket. These initiatives all embody our commitment to building a better world, and it's rewarding that my role is about delivering on that mission.