

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

NEWS RELEASES

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Husch Blackwell Hosts 2023 Cream City Construction Conference and Small Business Accelerator

On March 1, Husch Blackwell partnered with a number of Milwaukee-area organizations to host the Cream City Construction Conference and Small Business Accelerator in support of Milwaukee's underrepresented contractors.

The second annual event is part of Husch Blackwell's Communities for Change initiative, which has partnered with the firm's Construction Academy to promote equity, inclusion, and justice in Milwaukee's construction community. The event brought together nearly 100 attendees for an afternoon of networking and learning.

The three-hour long program kicked off with a keynote by Milwaukee's Mayor Cavalier Johnson, who exhorted attendees to develop relationships between industries and that events such as the Cream City Conference help minority-owned businesses thrive in the Milwaukee area. He encouraged the attendees to seek out similar opportunities.

Following Mayor Johnson's keynote, Husch Blackwell partners Joshua Levy and Eric Meier introduced the afternoon speakers. First, a panel led by Milwaukee Journal Sentinel commercial development reporter Tom Daykin discussed the region's construction project outlook for 2023. One of the biggest takeaways is that despite the current economic climate, the construction industry remains strong because there is still pent-up demand from 2020. Panelists included HUB International Sean Coykendall and Gilbane Building Company Senior Manager of Business Development Erik Lindstrom.

"We're grateful for our industry partners and the insight they provided," said Levy, who co-leads the firm's Construction Academy. "The construction

industry remains strong and we're eager to see how our clients promote opportunities for developing businesses as they continue to transform Milwaukee in positive ways."

The second panel led by Husch Blackwell Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer Amanda Garcia-Williams focused on ways minority-owned construction firms can partner with larger developers. The panel encouraged attendees to build relationships they want to learn from and do business with. The panel also touched on the importance of a contractor knowing its business and capabilities—that the right teams and partners needed to be pulled together to deliver excellence. Panelists included AllCon President Ana Lopez; National Association of Minority Contractors – Wisconsin President Ugo Nwagbaraocha; and Abaxent Chief Problem Solver Adonica Randall.

"New development is occurring throughout our cities, including in the backyards of those who are historically underrepresented in the construction industry," said Garcia-Williams. "It's important that diverse businesses are a part of the development process. Further, their local insights and unique perspectives can improve the outcomes of the project."

"Our Construction Academy's focus on teaming arrangements assists small and disadvantaged construction firms enter the market and sustain growth," said Quincy McNeal, Husch Blackwell's Pro Bono Counsel. "It was great to see large contractors networking with the minority-owned businesses and seeing those relationships beginning."

Beginning later this spring, Husch Blackwell will be launching a series of networking workshops that will dive deeper into topics and issues that can help minority-owned construction firms position their businesses for success. The first workshop event will be co-hosted with M3 Insurance and will focus on the understanding of risk transfer and coverage requirements in a contract and how to protect a business with a proper insurance program.