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News Release**Philadelphia Real Estate Alliance's First Town Hall
Addresses Challenges and Changes to Commercial Real Estate Post-COVID*****300+ Regional Developers, Builders, Owners and Operators
Gathered to Share Knowledge to "Build Back Better"***

PHILADELPHIA – April 11, 2022 – Rain, fog and an early start couldn't hold back the flow of the more than 300 commercial real estate professionals who attended the Philadelphia Real Estate Alliance's first Town Hall on April 6. The in-person, members-only program introduced the Alliance, which was formed during the pandemic, followed by a panel discussion and a fireside chat, both focused on the state of the real estate market and the political climate in the region.

Lauren Gilchrist, Managing Director of Research for Longfellow Real Estate Partners, co-chaired the event and welcomed a packed room, noting "We are on the cusp of something achievable and potentially phenomenal. PREA members, city government and community stakeholders have a common goal: for Philadelphia to become a model city, and we, our membership, are offering our collective resources, support and desire to work side-by-side to achieve this mission."

The Alliance is focused on educating and advocating for the region's four largest real estate associations: **NAIOP** – the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, **GBCA** - General Building Contractors Association, **BOMA** – Building Owners & Managers Association, and **BIA** – Building Industry Association.

Philadelphia Council Member Allan Domb, who attended the event with several City representatives said, "PREA represents a collaborative, diverse group of stakeholders who share a vision and mission to move our city forward. They can help our city accomplish many goals by creating pathways to local jobs, grow our economy and provide resources to neighborhoods that need it most. Our city succeeds when we're all working together and utilizing resources to benefit everyone."

Anne Nevins, CEO of PIDC, Philadelphia’s public-private economic development corporation, moderated “**Build Back Better**” which featured commentary from **Rija Beares of CBRE (NAIOP)**; **Ben Connors, of GBCA**; **Don Haas of Brandywine Realty Trust (BOMA)**; and **Mo Rushdy, The Riverwards Group (BIA)**.

Some of the key discussions included:

- Connors said that while cranes positioned around the City show development activity, they can be deceptive. “GBCA tracks construction labor hours, and 2016 was our ‘high water mark.’ Today we are down 18% from 8.6 million construction labor hours to 7.2 million hours – real jobs.”
- Rushdy said that incentives for bringing much needed development of market rate and affordable residences to the city should include tax abatements for low-income projects in “the neighborhoods so the people who work here can afford to live here.”
- Beares highlighted that “Life Sciences are here to stay which is a good way to replace the base of jobs lost during the pandemic ... These are well-paying jobs at all levels, not just the high end, but even with the development space announced there’s not yet enough space to meet demand.”
- Haas echoed Rushdy and Connors with “there’s a tremendous need for affordable housing,” noting that “leadership has to begin to call for a return to the workplace” because so many associated businesses rely on income from the work environment.

Connors also noted that “part of our success has to be felt as the success of the people of Philadelphia. We must align with *their* interests and help create stability,” even in the face of rising materials costs and interest rates.

A ‘fireside chat’ with Gilchrist and **Anne Fadullon, Dir. of the Dept. of Planning & Development for the City of Philadelphia** followed. Falludon first spoke about “developers’ peripheral vision” - a way for CRE professionals to focus on not only what they are trying to achieve but what is going on in the City around them. “We need to have honest discussion about many things, such as jobs, housing and education. And we (the City) have to get to ‘Yes’ faster, with more streamlined processes.”

Fadullon said one way to do that is a long-term play. “Our best delivery system for growing Life Science in particular is to provide talent that is ready to work ... and it needs to be across the board: middle, high school and college” with STEM programs that ready people to work so they can choose to live in Philadelphia.

After the meeting, Council Member At-Large, Derek Green, who also attended, said, “In such a challenging real estate market as the one we are currently witnessing, the need for vital industry insight that can help grow Philadelphia’s economic landscape cannot be overstated. I’m grateful to the Philadelphia Real Estate Alliance for their collective efforts in promoting Philadelphia and moving our City forward.”

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