

CS471017

Social and economic equity: How to support and advance minority owned business enterprises in the AEC industry

Amie Kromis
Skanska USA

Michael Russell
H.J. Russell & Company

Deryl McKissack
McKissack & McKissack

Learning Objectives

- Learn about steps to proactively and meaningfully engage with DBEs (disadvantaged business enterprises).
- Learn how to collaboratively create opportunities for MBEs.
- Discover resources to connect MBE firms.
- Learn new ways to support MBEs through their lenses.

Description

Although programs focusing on the growth of minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) and black-owned businesses have been in existence for decades in the United States, the growth of these firms in the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry has either remained constant or diminished. In this fireside chat, Amie Kromis will speak with Deryl McKissack, Chairwoman and CEO of McKissack & McKissack, and Michael Russell, President and CEO of H.J. Russell & Company. The conversation will explore how the AEC industry can support MBEs through the lens of these companies' successful—yet unnecessarily challenging—experiences in building capacity and competing on their own.

Speaker(s)



Amie Kromis
National Director of Vendor Diversity of Skanska USA

Amie Kromis is Skanska USA Building’s first National Director of Vendor Diversity where she collaborates with leadership and leads a team to maximize opportunities for diverse firms through inclusive business practices. Her work focuses on strengthening and enhancing consistency within Skanska’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Compliance Program, subcontractor development and outreach across the United States. Kromis brings a unique perspective to her role, having worked with both Skanska’s construction and development business units in multiple geographies, and is passionate about providing economic empowerment to underrepresented businesses.

Kromis received her bachelor’s degree in corporate communications and public affairs from Southern Methodist University and holds a MBA from Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business where she was a Forte Foundation Fellow. Kromis hails from Nashville, Tennessee and currently resides in Washington, D.C.



Deryl McKissack
Chairwoman and CEO of McKissack & McKissack

Deryl McKissack is Chairwoman and CEO of McKissack & McKissack, an architectural, engineering, program and construction firm managing \$15 billion in projects nationwide. During the past 30 years under her leadership, McKissack has managed such landmark projects as: the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African-American History and Culture, MGM National Harbor, Obama Presidential Center, and the Navy Pier Centennial Projects in Chicago. The firm is also known

for leading the construction and serving as the architectural firm of record for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, DC.

As a licensed professional engineer and registered project management professional, Deryl McKissack is part of the fifth generation of her family to work in the design and construction

field. McKissack & McKissack is the outgrowth of the nation’s oldest African-American architectural firm and traces its beginnings to Moses McKissack, a master builder who was also a slave.

By the age of six, Deryl was drafting architectural drawings under her father’s tutelage. After graduating from Howard University with a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering, she worked at Turner Construction and Dames & Moore; while at these firms, she honed her experience in field work, business development, and construction management.

In 1990, with a shoestring budget of \$1,000 and a business plan crafted with help from a mentor at her alma mater, Deryl started McKissack & McKissack. Of that formative time, she remembers, “What got me through was a whole lot of passion.”

Through Deryl’s guidance and vision, McKissack & McKissack has grown to 150 employees, with offices in Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Chicago; Los Angeles; Dallas; and Austin. The firm is ranked by Engineering News Record as a national Top 50 Program Management, Top 100 Construction Management-for-Fee firm and top 25 Architecture firms as ranked by the Washington Business Journal. McKissack also received the DC’s Business of the Year Award by the DC Chamber of Commerce in 2017. She was named the 2013 Engineer of the Year by the District of Columbia Society of Professional Engineers.



Michael Russell
President and CEO of H.J. Russell & Company

Michael Russell, Chief Executive Officer, succeeded his father Herman Russell, who founded H. J. Russell & Company in 1952. A 30-year veteran of the construction and real estate development industry, Michael is responsible for the management, direction and overview of Russell’s operations. His responsibilities include the oversight of projects and monitoring all management activities to ensure that contractual and exceptional customer service obligations are met.

Prior to becoming Chief Executive Officer, Michael spent most of his career with H.J. Russell & Company serving in a variety of executive positions, most recently as Executive Vice President where he was responsible for the management and strategic direction of the construction and program management divisions. During his tenure, Michael held a variety of positions from Cost Estimator to Project Manager to head of Business Development.

Michael is also Vice Chairman of Concessions International (CI). CI is a food and beverage operator primarily in leading airports throughout the United States. CI is currently in eight major airports and operates thirty-six food and beverage concepts.

Additional AEC Resources

Industry Organizations

There are many organizations throughout the country to search, discover and utilize diverse firms. The following organizations certify diverse businesses for recognition by public and private diversity programs:

- The [National Minority Supplier Development Council](#) advances business opportunities for certified minority business enterprises (African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans) and connects them to corporate members.
- [Women's Business Enterprise National Council](#) (WBENC) is the largest certifier of women-owned businesses in the U.S. and a leading advocate for women business owners and entrepreneurs.
- [National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender \(LGBT\) Chamber of Commerce](#) (NGLCC) is the business voice of the LGBT community, the largest advocacy organization dedicated to expanding economic opportunities and advancements for LGBT people, and the exclusive certifying body for LGBT-owned businesses.
- [Disability:IN](#) certifies disability-owned business enterprises (DOBE) and veteran-disability owned businesses and links them to organizations looking to diversify their supply chains

The following organizations and resources do not certify diverse businesses, but rather advocate for diverse businesses in the architecture, construction and engineering industries:

- [National Association of Minority Contractors](#)
- [National Association of Minority Architects](#)
- [American Institute of Architects \(AIA\) Equity in Architecture Commission Report](#)
- [Associated General Contractors of America \(AGC\) The Business Case for Diversity & Inclusion in the Construction Industry](#)
- [MBEs Mean Business](#)