

TOP STORIES

Sponsor Spotlight – Rammy Urban Infill:

APRIL 6, 2020



ULI San Diego – Tijuana depends on the support from our dedicated local sponsors. Over the next few months, we will be taking some time to highlight the unique projects and insights from our most active supporters. This month, we are showcasing the work of Rammy Cortez and his newly formed company Rammy Urban Infill.

We posed a few questions to get you acquainted with Rammy and his projects.

How did you develop your passion for real estate and walkability?

I scratch my own itch. For the past decade, my wife and I have lived, worked and played downtown San Diego, all while sharing 1 car that sits in the garage most days. I'm building microunits as small as 200 SF, the same size as a parking space, and I believe the need to house people far outweighs the need to house cars- hence my literal tag line "Housing People, Not Cars". Getting people out of their cars promotes community at the hyper local level. There's something special about running into people you know on the sidewalk, a sense of ownership not of a home, but of our community that's been lost. The best mode of transportation isn't an automobile, it isn't even a bicycle, it's our own two legs. I'm 38 years old, I am a millennial so I don't read stacks of reports, I just build what my friends want to live in.

You say you like to hang with people who "drag you up." Can you name a few?

I live by a Tony Robbins quote "Peoples lives are a direct reflection of the expectations of their peers." When people think of mentorship they typically think of an older well established professional at the cusp of retirement. I took a way different overlooked approach to mentorship and that was to invest in my peer group. My peer group relationship were cultivated through ULI Young Leaders Group. I served on the Young Leaders Group Board from 2015-2018 and served as a co-chair in the YLG Partnership Forum Group program. It's there where I met friend and peer mentor Andrew Malick. I just shared with his mom that I appreciate riding her son's coat tails because he's always a few steps in front me trailblazing the path. In that same Partnership Forum Group I met friend and mentor Greg Strangman. Greg's been an inspired me to follow my gut, do what's right, treat everyone fair, and the rest will follow. Most notably, friend and mentor, Richard Keough, took me under his wing at 22 years old and CC'd me on every development deal email and let me sit in on meetings way over my head. I pinch my-self today because it's now come full circle as I'm serving as a 2020 YLG Partnership Forum Group 1 Mentor with Greg Strangman as the group Advisor- needless to say PFG Group 1 is badass.

You are a big promoter of Community. Can you share how you're are involved?

My wife Traci and host all food and service the last Friday of every month to serve 120 supportive housing residents at Path Housing Downtown San Diego. We come together with friends to create positive change in the community, meet new people in the process, and have fun doing it! If you're interested in volunteering, we could use your helping hand and giving heart to prepare and serve dinner service to some of our city's less fortunate.

I'm also active in City of San Diego policy. last year I was on a ULI panel for Transit Priority Area No Parking and helped rally support by our development community. I've worked with the ULI Director to provide written support of the 30th St Bike Lanes and most recently support for PPSF DIF Fees and Self Certification Reform. I'm currently serving on the Community Planning Group Reform Task Force and sit in a guest Developer at the monthly Circulate San Diego Policy meeting.

You say that experience is your best teacher. Which project taught you the most?

Consistency in life has taught me the most. I showed up to ULI at 24 years old in a suit with shoulder pads my mom bought me from Macy's because I couldn't afford it. I never left and that made all the difference. Jonathan Segal says "real estate development is like pushing a boulder up a mountain." Every day I wake up at 4:30 am, meditate, journal, read, train at the Boxing Club, and start work at 7 am- all before most people wake up. The biggest learning lesson from specific projects, is to recognize the difference between good problems and bad problems. Good problems are solvable (i.e. tough topography, export clay, etc.) but bad problems are not (i.e. next door to a freeway or power plant). When I started climbing the real estate ladder 2010 I worked on a house flip in a rough neighborhood where juveniles sold drugs from the sidewalk – bad problem. I had to hire a local elder named Big R.I.P. for security (extortion) to put a hand written sign in the front yard, that read "Big R.I.P. Security, Don't Mess with this House!". Needless to say the house didn't fly off the market.

What are your long-term goals?

I'm always looking outside our industry and city for inspiration. I recall Mexican architect Jorge Gracia, sharing with me that the inspiration for the pod structures at Hotel Endemnico, in Valle de Guadalupe, came from the "umbrella hat" that used to be sold at the Spring Valley Swap Meet. I recently joined the San Diego Hotel Motel Association and look forward to developing + building a hospitality concept. Long term I have my eyes set on an Urban Master plan with individuals parcels developed by my friends.

