

## NEWS // PRESIDENT PROFILE

### Up close with Jim Lighthizer



Working as an industrial brokerage professional with CBRE for 16 years and founding Chesapeake Real Estate Group, a full-service commercial real estate development and investment firm more than 15 years ago, NAIOP Maryland's new President brings unique perspectives to his two-year term. He credits former NAIOP- MD Presidents Rob Bavar, Cathy Ward and Dianna Wilhelm for convincing him to become involved in the association and his father, O. James Lighthizer, former Anne Arundel County Executive, for piquing his interest in and demonstrating the importance of maintaining strong relationships in the public sector.

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#### **Growing up in a household of politics**

My father fought hard for what he believed in, and there were many spirited conversations around the kitchen table where we heard his views about development, the importance of land conservation but also having a pro-business mentality and the value of job creation and balancing the budget, particularly in down years. He served in numerous public service roles throughout his career, including many as a volunteer, and this instilled my respect for and understanding of public servants from a young age.

#### **Choosing real estate as a career**

It was important to enter an industry that I perceived as having no barriers and no limitations, with the sky being the limit. I liked the idea of being a broker working on 100 percent commission because it energized and motivated me to get what I earned.

#### **Transitioning from broker to real estate principal**

Representing and working with a number of national institutional property owners, I saw a lack of future new Class A business parks. I pivoted towards joint venturing with these institutional owners in several one-off transactions and worked my way into developing most of the new Class A industrial projects. With capital rapidly flowing into the local marketplace, my company took advantage of the opportunity by putting together some projects that have been leased by good companies.

#### **Goals as NAIOP-MD President**

The association is extremely healthy and vibrant and nothing major needs to be fixed. My priority is to more widely disseminate the message – both internally but more importantly externally – that members of the commercial real estate industry are performing great things to the benefit of the public in terms of improving the environment, strengthening our economy and making our community a better place to work and live. I am counting on everyone's help to spread this message.

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