

## Quality, Improvement, and Growth

**An Interview with Brandi Hanback,  
Executive Vice President, Deputy Head of Development and Head of FTZ Trade & Logistics, Rockefeller Group**

**EDITORS' NOTE** Brandi Hanback is Executive Vice President and Deputy Head of Development for Rockefeller Group, the U.S. developer and owner. She is also head of FTZ, Trade & Logistics. She oversees the industrial development activities of Rockefeller Group's regional offices throughout the United States. She is based in Maryland and is a member of the company's executive management team headquartered in New York. Hanback is responsible for Rockefeller Group's development strategy, which spans property types in major metro regions, port markets, and inland distribution hubs. She also has experience consulting with tenants and clients on supply chain requirements on behalf of the company's long-standing Foreign Trade Zone Services division, which works directly with tenants and clients on a consulting basis on complex international trade, logistics and customs matters. Prior to joining Rockefeller Group in 2003, Hanback was a Senior Manager and Area Leader at KPMG LLP in Washington, DC. She also served for 10 years as Executive Director, and is a former Chairman of the Board of Directors, of the National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones. Hanback holds a Juris Doctorate and is admitted to the bars of Maryland, District of Columbia and the U.S. Supreme Court. She holds a master's degree in international transactions, is a licensed Customs Broker and an Accredited Zones Specialist.



Brandi Hanback

talented and caring people throughout the organization. We share values of quality, improvement and growth while supporting each other to achieve our mutual goals. We value the importance that real estate can play in individual lives and communities and strive to be a positive influence on the people and places we touch. Our leadership team is supportive and collaborative and genuinely cares about our joint successes. We have learned that when we work together optimally, we achieve success that enhances our track record and leads to more opportunities.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

In my current role, I am the Deputy Head of Development supporting our expanding national development pipeline, which encompasses Industrial, Office, Multifamily and Mixed-Use. I mention Industrial first deliberately, not only because it is my favorite, but also because people often don't associate industrial development with purposeful real estate development and design. I take particular pride in the industrial projects we undertake that often transform underutilized and challenged sites into modern, vibrant and job generating places to work where many of America's finest report to work each day to

process and deliver the products we rely on in our daily lives. It is an especially exciting time to be involved in industrial development as manufacturing makes a resurgence in the United States and companies are actively investing in our economy and our future.

**Will you discuss Rockefeller Group's industrial development activities and where you see the greatest opportunities for growth for the future?**

The future is bright for industrial as communities and companies come together to define workable solutions to successfully co-exist. This means redeveloping sites in many cases where obsolete facilities are no longer functional, including investing in energy efficiency, environmentally friendly conditions and attractive design, both internally and externally, where people actually want to work. This is increasingly important as companies compete to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Sounds like office development, right? Industrial and office development are not as different as you might think. Our greatest opportunities for growth in industrial are tied to populations, ports, transportation, manufacturing, and labor. We are actively expanding our industrial presence in new regions and new markets across the country, while continuing our success in gateway locations such as Northern New Jersey

**COMPANY BRIEF** Headquartered in New York, Rockefeller Group ([rockefellergroup.com](http://rockefellergroup.com)) has nine U.S. offices. The company's track record extends nearly a century, with its roots traced back to the development of Rockefeller Center. This history has provided the foundation for deep expertise, an influential brand in real estate, financial stability and an expectation for distinctive projects that provide value to partners, clients, and communities. The company's \$5 billion development pipeline totals more than 30 projects.

**How do you describe Rockefeller Group's culture and values?**

Rockefeller Group is a company that makes you proud to come to work and grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such



A rendering of Rockefeller Group's Spotswood, New Jersey, logistics building, an under-construction 655,000-square-foot warehouse and distribution facility on 60 acres



*The newly completed 55 Paradise Lane, Rockefeller Group's 172,622-square-foot distribution center on approximately 11 acres in Bayside, New York*

and Southern California. While less densified, the Southeast is also proving to be increasingly important for industrial development and the combination of migration trends, ports growth and successful business attraction strategies are providing all of the needed elements for long-term expansion and success.

**Will you highlight the history of Rockefeller Group's Foreign Trade Zone Services division and what have been the keys to the strength and leadership of the division?**

Very much in line with its deep roots in industrial development, Rockefeller Group has been involved with U.S. Foreign-Trade Zones since the late 1970s. As an early mover in New Jersey FTZ development, Rockefeller Group teamed up with the State of New Jersey in forming FTZ 44 where manufacturers and distributors thrive today generating economic development and participating in international trade from their U.S. bases of operations. More than 40 years and over 300 FTZs later, Rockefeller Group maintains specialized expertise in setting up, activating and operating foreign-trade zones, which has evolved into a successful consulting practice whereby RGFTZS professionals advise communities and companies on how to realize the program's benefits while maintaining compliant with federal laws and regulations. Our professionals have decades of experience working hand-in-hand with Grantees, Operators and Users of U.S. foreign-trade zones supporting their efforts to successfully compete internationally. That experience, combined with an understanding of industrial facilities including physical layout considerations, inventory control and supply chain optimization differentiates our professionals and our company in the

industry. We are uniquely situated to assist tenants because of our knowledge and daily insights into both industrial development and trade and logistics.

**How has trade and logistics regulations and policy evolved over the years?**

Trade policy and regulations are constantly changing, and companies are challenged to keep up with the latest requirements while staying focused on their core competencies. For this reason, retaining experts whose sole focus is staying current and refining best practices makes sense. For most manufacturers and distributors, logistics (including trade and transportation) represents a significant cost center and risk function. Successful implementation and operation of a foreign-trade zone is one of the few related strategies that can actually drive savings and supply chain efficiencies while lowering risks within an otherwise costly and frequently disruptive performance metric.

**How important is it for Rockefeller Group to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?**

DEI integration is not just important because it is the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do. At Rockefeller Group, we work on highly complex, multi-year projects where many things can go wrong and projects do not proceed exactly as planned. By collaborating among a wide and diverse group of professionals with different perspectives and experiences, we problem-solve creatively, building consensus and bettering ourselves while improving our collective performance. I love participating in meetings where difficult challenges play out. Inevitably, everyone has an informed opinion when they enter the discussion. Through the

course of deliberation, we learn from each other, weighing the pros and cons to mitigate risk while driving outcomes. Through the art of compromise and balancing our various interests, we come up with solutions we can all support and stand behind. You just can't generate that level of creative problem-solving by navigating issues on your own or talking only to others who think like you. This is why I like to come to work and meet with colleagues in person. There is something about face-to-face interactions that bring us closer together, facilitate learning and sharing, and result in deeper appreciation. We truly are better together and the best exchanges are the ones that take us in unexpected directions and lead us down unexplored paths. In my 20 years at the company, I have never experienced a time when we worked together as one team more openly or more successfully. I have experienced downturns and we will experience downturns again, but we are better equipped than ever to navigate complexities because we have an increasingly more diverse team engaged for a common cause.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the real estate industry?**

I really do. Women are contributing in every aspect of real estate and we are experiencing it in our own organization with powerful, smart women driving our company forward in Development, Design & Construction, Leasing, Property Management, Treasury/Finance, Tax, Accounting, Audit, Legal, Human Resources, Corporate Communications/Marketing and more. There is no job in real estate that women cannot do and as more women are proving their worth, we are seeing more women performing at higher levels of management.

**You have been with Rockefeller Group for 20 years. What has made the experience so special for you?**

The opportunity to grow and evolve with the organization has kept me here along with a sense of duty, service and loyalty to the amazing people I get to work with every day. Even though I have worked at Rockefeller Group for 20 years, I had an established career before I arrived, working 15 years at other organizations and consulting with hundreds of organizations across the country. Rockefeller Group is special for its commitment to its employees, partners, projects and organizational excellence. That is what keeps me here and inspires me to contribute in any way I can to our continued success. At this stage of my career, I also really enjoy working with our regional and corporate teams, engaging with a new generation of up and comers with bright futures and excellent insights. The ability to continue learning and evolving is part of a meaningful human existence and I find that every day at Rockefeller Group. I hope I can continue giving back to a company that has given me so much and I consider it a privilege to support our regional and corporate teams while contributing to the experiences and professional development of our future leaders. ●