



AIMING FOR THE FENCES

**BEST Fence - DC, LLC:
The new CBE on the block**

by Vicki Speed



While some might admire the concrete pour or the precise crane operations on a job site, Barry Curtis looks beyond the obvious, admiring and even assessing the protective barriers that surround these active and often dangerous locations.

It wasn't always this way. In fact, nearly 15 years ago, as a managing director in the Investment Banking Group at Legg Mason Wood Walker, Inc., he was reviewing profit/loss statements and offering financial and strategic advice to his corporate clients. But Curtis always aspired to own his own construction-oriented company, or even a portfolio of companies—and to do it in the place where it all began for him, Washington, D.C.

That dream became reality in May 2018 when he opened the downtown office of *BEST Fence - DC, LLC*, a commercial fence installation company. This Certified Business Enterprise (CBE) designated company is his latest step toward setting new boundaries across the nation's capital.

LESSONS LEARNED

Curtis' path to fencing began in 1985 in Washington, D.C., where he earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Howard University. He quickly obtained a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) license and like many finance and accounting specialists, went to Wall Street.

But that wasn't the long-term profession he envisioned. After a few years at JPMorgan Chase & Co., he went back

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Barry C. Curtis, President
of BEST Fence – DC, LLC.

to school to get his master's in business administration, with a focus on real estate and finance, from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, followed by a stint at the Prudential in the company's Real Estate Equity Portfolio Management Group.

After three years with Prudential, he leveraged his accounting, finance and real estate experience into a position as vice president and senior equity research analyst in the Real Estate Equity Research Group of Alex. Brown

& Sons (now a division of Raymond James) in Baltimore, Maryland.

While this may not sound like an entrepreneurial move, it was a significant step in Curtis' mind. He recalls, "I was a stock analyst responsible for producing quarterly estimates, publishing equity research and making buy/sell stock recommendations for publicly owned real estate companies."

During his 12-year stint at Alex. Brown & Sons, Curtis also held other positions at the firm, including his last role as Director of Global Corporate Finance in the company's Investment Banking Group where he specialized in raising debt and equity capital and advising on mergers and acquisitions for Fortune 100 companies.

"In this capacity, I gained more insight into effective corporate structures, financial and back-office operations and even the personnel side of corporate organizations," Curtis explains.

After nearly 25 years of accounting, real estate and investment banking experience, he was ready to invest in a business of his own and apply the lessons learned from advising companies on all aspects of financial, strategic and business operations.

AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

When asked why construction, Curtis explains, "I wanted to own a business in the construction 'food chain,' and in the mid-Atlantic region because of the stabilizing presence of the federal government and the steady demand for commercial and infrastructure development in this region."

With an emphasis on small operating companies situated in large, high-growth business sectors, he evaluated a range of possibilities from mechanical and electrical businesses to window and drywall companies.

In 2009, he acquired a fencing company in Maryland.

"Fencing is a universal need in the real estate and construction space," Curtis adds. "It's an integral component of a security strategy aimed at protecting real estate assets and establishing physical and protective barriers. Then there's all the other fencing applications that include athletic fields, schools, highway and bridge fencing and large property owners, including commercial, municipal, state and federal property owners."

He would spend the next nine years growing and expanding that business—all the while looking to return to Washington, D.C.

“Fencing is a universal need in the real estate and construction space.”

Barry Curtis, Owner, BEST Fence – DC, LLC



BEST Fence – DC, LLC specializes in fencing of all types, including custom-built black chain-link pedestrian tunnel solutions.



Public and private entities look to BEST Fence – DC, LLC for high-security beta fencing with barbed wire and razor ribbon.

Curtis confirms, “The D.C. construction market is vibrant and active—and because of my time at Howard University, will always be a special place for me.”

NEW FENCING FRONTIERS

In May 2018, the opportunity to make the investment in a D.C.-based fencing business came to fruition. He leased office space and hired two estimators with a combined 25 years of experience as well as a trusted cadre of experienced installers.

Curtis’ next step in the operational development of his new company was to earn a CBE designation, which he achieved in April 2019. A CBE designation is only given to a business that is headquartered in the District of Columbia and has been certified by the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD).

“The CBE designation was very important for BEST Fence – DC because it opens so many doors in the D.C. market,” Curtis says. “Our team has relationships with many of the general contractors that perform work in the district and they are comfortable with the quality of work that we produce.”

Many city-funded projects require participation from contractors that have earned a CBE designation. “Subsequently, many of the general contractors can look to BEST Fence – DC to fulfill this CBE requirement, resulting in a win-win for the general contractor and BEST Fence – DC,” he adds.

DIVERSE DIRECTIONS

The business is only in its second year of operation, but Curtis and his team are already building an impressive backlog of work.

The company’s client roster includes some of the region’s largest general contractors, such as Turner Construction and Hamel Builders, Inc. Just recently, BEST Fence – DC won a contract to install fencing at Audi Field, the home stadium for the Major League Soccer team D.C. United in Buzzard Point, Washington, D.C.

Along with commercial fencing installations, repairs and maintenance services, the company’s lineup of fencing products is extensive with nearly every material type available, including wood, chain-link, ornamental aluminum and iron, solid steel and vinyl.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEST FENCE – DC, LLC

BEST Fence – DC, LLC provides a range of fencing solutions for athletic fields, including baseball backstops, outfields, soccer and football fields, tennis and basketball courts.



Fencing applications range from highway right of way and bridge fencing, to recreational fencing such as baseball backstops, outfields, soccer and football fields, tennis and basketball courts to automated gate operators and high-security detention facility fencing with barbed wire and razor ribbon. As well, the company provides safety netting, wood and steel guardrail and customized ornamental picket fencing.

Building the company's presence in the Washington, D.C., market will continue to be Curtis' focus in the coming years. He believes that support from companies like The Blue Book Building & Construction Network® (The Blue Book Network) is and will continue to be an integral tool in the execution of his strategic vision for growth.

"Our relationship with The Blue Book Network has grown," Curtis says. "The organization's knowledge base, connections and digital network will be vital to expanding our customer base and getting our name out. We expect to be one of the city's preeminent commercial fence contractors in short order."

Curtis realizes that his goals are high, but with his team, he believes there are no limits, and certainly no boundaries, to the opportunities now that he's returned to his Washington, D.C., roots. 🐦



Barry C. Curtis used his experience as a stock and real estate investment analyst to establish BEST Fence – DC, LLC, a commercial fence installation company.

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Educated as an aerospace engineer, Vicki Speed is one of the most prolific and engaging writers in the AEC industry.