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2021 Women in Commercial Real Estate: Joelle Denham, Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer, The Bulfinch Companies

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Joelle Denham
Senior Vice President, Chief Financial Officer

The Bulfinch Companies

What are some of the benefits of being a mentor or having a mentor? I would not be where I am today without the guidance and encouragement I received from my own mentor, who I met early on in my career while at Arthur Andersen, and subsequently worked with at Deloitte and then DiCicco, Gulman & Co. One of the hardest yet most rewarding lessons I learned from my mentor was the value of honest and constructive feedback, which has truly helped me learn and excel in my career. I find it especially rewarding to share the lessons I have learned to younger professionals that I currently mentor. Participating in the mentor program at Bulfinch has been a wonderful opportunity to help shape the development of individuals who are at an earlier stage in their careers.

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months? I expect COVID will continue to dominate our industry, especially as we head into the colder months—and with that, I anticipate a continued focus on the suburbs. Environment, social, and corporate governance will continue to be a major focus for companies, particularly with the implementation of new technologies providing the ability to track and evaluate more data. As co-chair of Bulfinch's technology committee, I've had the pleasure of overseeing the implementation of several new software platforms, such as Yardi and Juniper Square, that are transforming the way Bulfinch does business and helping to create efficiencies to streamline productivity.

What led you to your current profession? I have always loved numbers from an early age and knew that I would end up attending a college with a business focus. Immediately after graduating from Bentley University, I joined the real estate group at Arthur Andersen. It was there that I found my first interest in real estate and established my background in public accounting. That experience, coupled with my choice to later pursue a career in the private sector, has allowed for a successful 20-year career in the real estate industry and involvement in the Real Estate Finance Association's program committee.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of? Serving as co-chair for our technology committee at Bulfinch, my proudest moment has been the successful implementation of Yardi, a property management software that has transformed the efficiency of our business and how we operate. One of the benefits Yardi has provided is accelerating our efforts towards becoming completely paperless, particularly for payables, which supports Bulfinch mission and commitment to environmental and sustainable responsibility. Yardi has also been a critical tool during the pandemic, allowing our team to conduct business as usual with a distributed workforce.

What is one characteristic that you believe every woman in commercial real estate should possess? I strongly believe in the importance of adaptability and flexibility, which goes back to why technology is so critical in our business. As individuals, and as organizations, we sometimes get stuck in our own way of operating, but there is so much benefit that technology can provide us. This has become even more prevalent with COVID, as we're seeing how technology allows us to work effectively as a distributed and highly productive workforce. Moving forward, companies will struggle to retain and

attract top talent without offering a flexible work model and an agile work environment.

What time management strategies do you find to be the most effective for you? I love to write things down and make lists that I can check off. I use Microsoft One Note because I'm able to see everything I need to accomplish in one place, allowing me to easily track and complete my critical tasks from the office, road, or house without worry.

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