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2022 Women in Commercial Real Estate: Elyse Kelley The Bulfinch Companies (Bulfinch)

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Elyse Kelley
AVP, People Operations Manager

The Bulfinch Companies (Bulfinch)

What advice would you offer to women getting into the CRE industry? CRE can be intimidating to jump into, especially for women, and even more so if you are earlier in your career. My advice is to stay the course, be a sponge for knowledge, find your voice, and seek out a couple of mentors. A great mentor is invaluable and will play a key role in shaping you in ways that you may not expect. Lastly, align yourself with an organization, like I have done with Bulfinch, that supports and promotes women, not because it is the right thing to do, but because they believe in the power of a diverse team.

Who is a woman leader you find to be inspiring and why? There are so many amazing women in the CRE industry, who have a huge impact and influence on others. I have been fortunate to work with several of them but need to call out two women who have been impactful mentors to me, Deborah Twiss and Pamela Yang. Deb, then C&W's operations director, was my first boss when I entered the CRE industry in 2011 and was a beacon in many ways for navigating the male-dominated industry. Pam, Bulfinch's amazing COO, has so much knowledge to share and challenges me to be a better version of myself every day.

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of? Staying on theme, as co-chair of Bulfinch's DEI Committee, I would be remiss not to mention the tremendous work that Bulfinch has done, not just in the past year, but over the past several years to increase our team's diversity and to enhance equity and inclusion. The progress we have made is truly a team effort, and I am extremely proud of what we have done, what we continue to do, and the role I have played, in moving the needle – for our team, and for the industry.

Are you part of any CRE organizations? How have they helped your professional development? I am a member of CREW and am a graduate of CREW's most recent Leadership Academy class. Not only did the material of the course deepen my professional development, but the women I met and the relationships we developed will leave a lasting impact on me. The experience was a great reminder that while learning is great, to do so in a safe, supportive space with other women who have gone through similar yet different experiences, enhances the lessons learned in a way that I can't quite describe but wholeheartedly recommend to anyone with the opportunity to do so.