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2024 Women in CRE: Jen Davidson, Cummings Properties

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Jen Davidson, RA
Design Manager

What challenges have you faced as a woman in commercial real estate? I've been fortunate to spend most of my career at Cummings, where I feel highly valued as an equal. All working professionals will face challenges on the job until they realize that the relationships we build are just as important as the hard work we do. Successful CRE professionals know that this is the key to rewarding opportunities and accomplishments. As an architect at Cummings, I work hand-in-hand with engineers, designers, and construction professionals from every trade. I also partner with lawyers, accountants, property managers, and specialists in marketing, sales, and sustainability. The breadth of career paths available in this vast industry creates wonderfully differing viewpoints, making it essential that we build strong relationships in the CRE community so that we may grow and learn from each other.

What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of? Throughout my career at Cummings Properties, I've had the great satisfaction of being involved with its nonprofit affiliate, Cummings Foundation. As a volunteer on the grant application review committee, I've had the opportunity to play a direct role in awarding transformative funding to 150 community nonprofits through the annual Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program. Day to day, I gain a sense of fulfillment from knowing that my work for Cummings Properties benefits the community, because, at Cummings, all profits go to nonprofits.

What advice do you have for young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate? Cross-train: Leverage and grow your knowledgebase by contributing to several aspects of the industry, as each piece of the real estate puzzle can directly inform the other. Working for a small firm, for example, can provide valuable opportunities to develop skills beyond your discipline. Having insight into multiple sides of a project – design, construction, financing, marketing, sales, etc. – will allow you to contribute at a high level and problem-solve in real time.

Do your research: Choose a supportive workplace with a culture that values communication, collaboration, and recognition. When considering a job offer, be sure to speak with one or two people working on site. (Your interviewer should be happy to accommodate such a request.) Observe how colleagues relate to each other. Ask what they're working on, taking note of their tone and body language.

Create your own syllabus: Unlike school, the first day of work doesn't typically include a program outlining all you'll need to know for the upcoming months. Get ready to soak up terabytes of information, ask tons of questions, and take copious notes. Master the tasks assigned to you—likely the ones no one else wants to do—and fuel your career growth until you're the person assigning those tasks to others. Seize opportunities for development and continuing education, identify and suggest process efficiencies, push for new responsibilities, and solicit feedback regularly.

Why should this nominee be recognized in our Women in Commercial Real Estate Spotlight?

“Jen Davidson has been at the forefront of Cummings Properties’ building design efforts for 25 years, helping to expand the size and capability of the design studio. She wields exceptional technical expertise, highly personable demeanor, and quick, critical thinking to spirit complex commercial and multi-family residential projects from concept to creation. Jen also conceptualized designs for Cummings’ national and international philanthropic projects. A model team builder, she works seamlessly with colleagues from other disciplines and also volunteers as a National Council of Architectural Registration Boards mentor to assist less experienced colleagues in reaching their career goals. Jen’s positive energy is contagious. This strength, combined with her range of skills, dedication, and supportive leadership, makes her an asset to both Cummings and the CRE industry at large.” - Jim Trudeau, Chief Design Officer at Cummings Properties.

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