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55 YEARS

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2024 Women in CRE: Sienna DeSantis, Samuels & Associates

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Sienna DeSantis
Development Manager

What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of? One of my most recent accomplishments is Lyrik, formerly known as Parcel 12, which opened recently. I joined the team at the start of construction, and it has been incredible to witness the project's evolution and successful completion. Seeing the project variables I worked on come together is truly rewarding. Additional projects and transactions include pro-bono work for the Beer Garden in Boston Common, and the PNF process for 1400 Boylston, a new mixed-development project in the Fenway, that will feature office and lab spaces, retail, new open space for the community, and a satellite branch of the Boston Public Library.

What is your vision for the future of women in commercial real estate? My vision for the future of women in commercial real estate is one where women are represented at every level and sector of the industry. I also see a future where more resources and industry groups are dedicated to empowering and advancing women, to leadership positions including more representation at the developer and ownership levels. The industry will only gain more strength as we continue to foster a collaborative environment that spotlights women successes and furthers their leadership in real estate.

What advice do you have for young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate? My advice to young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate is to actively seek out mentors in the field and not hesitate to engage in meaningful conversations. More often than not, people are willing to share their knowledge and experiences. Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to have incredible mentors who have guided me forward and helped me overcome challenges. Joining organizations like CREW was pivotal for me, and now I work to pay it forward to the next generation by mentoring Samuels & Associates interns through programs like CREST and acting as an advisor and judge for Boston College's Corcoran Center Case Competition.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in commercial real estate? Entering any field can be an exciting yet daunting experience. Early on, I found myself among a small number of women in a fast-paced, constantly evolving field. Fresh out of undergrad, I felt it particularly challenging to speak up in a room full of seasoned experts, many of which were not women. That said I was lucky enough to have one of my first project's lead by a woman, through her mentorship I learned the power of preparation which can make all the difference when navigating this fast-paced industry. In addition to those early years, I continued to seek out mentorships and support from other women, not only in development, but also asset management, design, and legal, and finance to stay on top of industry trends and best practices, as well as to expand my knowledge in the industry. Joining organizations like CREW allowed me to connect with and learn from women in real estate, which has been invaluable in helping me thrive and grow professionally.