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2024 Women in CRE: Anna-Jean McGillivray, BGO

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Anna-Jean McGillivray
Principal, Portfolio Management

What recent project, transaction, or accomplishment are you most proud of? I am especially proud of selling an office building in a Raleigh, North Carolina, a significant achievement given the challenging office market. With the sector facing high vacancy rates and shifting demand, this sale came after a few false starts and one buyer falling through. However, I ultimately closed the deal with industry friends, making it both successful and enjoyable. It was also our client's first seller financing venture, a collaborative joint effort which the client's debt team and pilot program with we're now using again. Currently, we have two more office buildings under contract, aiming to close by year-end.

What challenges have you faced as a woman in commercial real estate? Like others, I've faced the challenge of often being the only woman at the table – whether it's at a closing dinner or in negotiations. Finding my niche in this industry also wasn't easy. Many women tend to gravitate toward asset management, but over the years I learned that I thrive in a transaction-based role. This took time and a willingness to explore different positions to find where I belonged. I'm grateful that I remained open to trying various roles, as it has made me a better, more well-rounded professional.

What advice do you have for young women aspiring to enter commercial real estate? My advice for young women entering commercial real estate is to avoid limiting yourself to one area. It is important to gain experience across different sectors and functions within the industry to bring versatility and a diverse perspective to the table. Early in my career, I struggled with imposter syndrome, fearing that others would realize I didn't have all the answers. However, I soon learned that confidence grows with time and experience, especially for women. Embrace the learning curve, trust your abilities, and don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone – diversity in your experience will set you apart.

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

“Anna-Jean McGillvray excels in nimble, practical execution of an array of CRE matters. She is deal and results-oriented, encouraging and expediting the best outcomes with respect to both typical business issues and more surprising circumstances. Her work ethic and drive are unparalleled in achieving the best possible outcomes for BGO and its clients. Anna-Jean has the rare ability to mentally index the details and nuances while never losing the big picture. The way she mentors and works with younger women make her even more deserving of the spotlight, and an ideal role model for women following her in CRE.” - Jennifer Kiely, Chair of Mintz's Real Estate Practice at Mintz.

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