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2025 Women in CRE: Laurel Bowerman, Washington Trust

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Laurel Bowerman
Vice President, CRE Group

What drew you to commercial real estate, and what keeps you passionate? I started my career in a bank training program in which I rotated through all the banking departments. I was passionate about commercial real estate (CRE) from my first day of training in CRE. I loved being able to visit the real estate and “touch the tires” so to speak. I found it so much more exciting than funding working capital. The tangible elements are one of the most appealing aspects of this work.

What advice would you give to a woman considering a career in commercial real estate? If you have an affinity for commercial real estate, consider working for both developers and banks during your career. Experiencing both sides of the industry will help you find the niche that suits you best. This dual perspective will not just build your credibility, it will also deepen your understanding of how deals are structured and financed.

What's a challenge you faced early in your career, and how did you overcome it? Everyday there are challenges. To overcome them, you must face them head on, work hard, and work smartly.

What has been the most rewarding project or deal you've worked on in your career, and why? While I enjoy funding all CRE asset types, the most unique project I financed was the adaptive reuse of the historic Pontiac Mills located in Warwick, RI. The property is a multi-building complex that was used to weave Union Army uniforms during the Civil War and later used as a Fruit of the Loom factory. Restoration of these brick and beam buildings into apartments, offices, a brewery, and other retail spaces created a visual representation of our history and highlighted our ability to adapt and re-purpose historic properties.