

## **Why Investing in Women Drives Success in Commercial Real Estate**

As a historically male-led industry, CRE has not been a particularly easy field for women to break into and advance in. To turn the tide, Berkadia places a special emphasis on making sure its female employees have the space to learn, grow, and thrive as professionals and individuals.

Making space at the table for professionals from underrepresented groups does not just ensure that our company reflects the diverse communities we serve, it also allows us to develop new and innovative solutions and improve business outcomes by leveraging a wider breadth of ideas.

### **The Importance of Fostering Diverse Leaders**

We're seeing more and more clients seek out partners who reflect their own values and diverse thinking – pointing to a shift as the industry evolves to become more inclusive and in touch with the communities and people they serve.

With this evolution in mind, it's important to look inward to understand how we're fostering the development of women at every stage of their career – from entry level to C-suite positions. Company leaders' reflection on their ability to effectively support women is the only way that the industry at-large can deliver meaningful change for every professional. This requires a concerted effort to continue building out employee resource groups (ERGs), hosting networking events aimed at professional development, and ensuring that the right training mechanisms are in place to foster inclusivity and career growth.

For example, Berkadia has several ERG groups aimed at elevating professionals from underrepresented groups. In terms of women specifically, our BeWIN resource group supports women's career growth and advancement with the goal of developing, mentoring, and promoting various initiatives that are critical to their success. While equipping women with the resources they need to develop and mature is a natural part of this effort, BeWIN's overarching purpose revolves around creating a safe place for women to not only grow in their careers, but also feel supported at every step in their journey.

Additionally, Berkadia has hosted an annual conference – Women in CRE – that brings over 100 female executives in the CRE industry together to discuss industry trends, market conditions and, more importantly, how we can collectively move the needle on increasing female representation in the industry. In addition to our annual Women in CRE conference, Berkadia hosts Women's Dine Around events in major cities across the country, allowing our female clients and trusted partners to connect with Berkadians to network, build relationships, and stay up to date on state of the industry.

The Berkadia One Forum is an investment in people, particularly in people and businesses that have been historically underrepresented and have not had access to capital and opportunities. The event is designed to build and strengthen relationships within the CRE industry and expand the reach of black executives, decision makers, and business owners. The goal is to provide a forum to develop ideas, strengthen relationships, and celebrate the expansion of minority business participation and community development across different areas of commercial real estate.

These resource groups and events reflect the same goal – a commitment to our colleagues and partners to drive social change and shape the workforce to become more inclusive and reflective of diverse perspectives.

### **Growing a Women-Centric Platform**

Over the past several years, Berkadia has focused on giving a stronger voice to female leaders across our business. In particular, Berkadia Institutional Solutions has become an entirely women-led team with Hilary Provinse, Executive Vice President – Production and Capital Markets, Mary Ann King, Co-Head of Institutional Solutions, Dori Nolan, Senior Vice President – Institutional Solutions, and Laura Cathlina, Senior Managing Director – Institutional Solutions supporting both the investment sales and mortgage banking needs to the most active U.S. multifamily real estate investors.

Together, these women have a combined 125 years of experience in the CRE industry and lead a team of 360 employees, further demonstrating the value in uplifting women throughout the industry as they have just as much experience as men, if not more in certain cases. As a result, they've been able to create an inclusive environment that supports the advancement and career-growth of women across the business while also providing an example to employees that they too can climb the ranks and make their career ambitions a reality. With the promotion of Laura Cathlina, we've expanded our prowess to include mortgage banking services, providing institutional clients with a comprehensive and robust suite of innovative capital markets solutions and resources.

### **Advice from Berkadia's BIS Leaders**

***Practice Confidence*** – Voicing opinions and actively taking up space in places that have historically been male-dominated is often intimidating. Remember that your voice and opinions matter – your contributions are just as important as everyone else in the room.

***Stay Connected*** – Networking is instrumental in growing your career. Prioritize attendance at events and conferences with industry peers and don't hesitate to introduce yourself to new people.

***Seek Out Mentors*** – Whether an experienced colleague or someone outside your organization, seek out advice and tips from senior leaders in your industry. Hearing about their trials, tribulations, and successes can often help us to better navigate our everyday work life and can also shed some thoughtful perspective.

### **Continuing the Uplift Female Voices**

As we move into the future, we're continuing our unwavering focus on identifying top talent, especially from demographics that are historically underrepresented in the CRE industry. We understand that the only way to move forward is to engage and learn from individuals from different backgrounds and experiences – especially women. Promoting inclusivity and creating a culture that celebrates women's voices and offers them a seat at the table is not only a matter of gender equality but also a strategic imperative to advance the CRE industry as a whole.