



# Women of Influence

Whether they're finalizing deals, developing properties or providing advice, counsel or products and services, the professionals profiled here (alphabetically) are indeed movers and shakers in New Jersey. *Real Estate New Jersey* also asked the question, "What's the most important issue facing women in commercial real estate?" Their answers, some gender-specific, but many were not, are included with their profiles.

## WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

Continued from page 30

tional skills. She's worked with some of the largest institutional investors, owners and tenants in the tri-state region.

**Key Issue:** "One of the most important issues for women is keeping on top of their game while balancing family. Given the volatile market and uncertainties in the industry, it's imperative for not only women but all employees to keep a positive outlook, their skills sharp and the values in check."



**LYDIA STEFANOWICZ**  
Partner  
Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge

Lydia Stefanowicz represents lenders and borrowers in real estate acquisition, construction and financing as well as revolving and other credit facilities. Has also represented developers and investment funds in forming joint ventures, and has extensive experience in structuring, negotiating and documenting debt restructurings and workouts. A three-time New Jersey Super Lawyer, she also received NJ-NAIOP's President's Award in 2008.

**Key Issue:** "With turmoil in the capital markets, acquisitions aren't being made, properties aren't being developed, buildings aren't being built and new leases aren't being signed. To the extent that a larger percentage of women in commercial real estate work in the service sectors, they may be experiencing a more immediate impact in this economy than even owners, investors and property managers."



**HEATHER G. SUAREZ**  
Partner  
Walder, Hayden & Brogan

Responsible for real estate, corporate and commercial law matters involving complex financing, Heather Suarez handles all legal aspects of real estate development, including condemnation, zoning, planning, traffic and environmental issues. For corporate law, she handles stock or asset acquisitions, dispositions, formation of LLCs and LPs, negotiating building contracts and commercial leases. Often described as a "pioneer in the legal industry," she was her firm's first female attorney when she was hired in 1981.

**Key Issue:** "While everyone recognizes that the commercial real estate market is challenging, women need to remain focused. We each need to keep doing what we've always done. One can't fall into the trap of deciding that you need to work harder at the office because of the downturn. The worst thing to do is to stop networking, attending seminars and professional meetings."



**JONI SWEETWOOD**  
Vice President  
The Kislak Co. Inc.

Representing both buyers and sellers of investment properties, Joni Sweetwood has brokered more than \$60 million of sales over the past year. A major transaction was the sale of 105 units in Orange, not her biggest deal but very complex requiring a lot of work prior to completing the "time of the essence" closing. Has won numerous awards from her firm.

**Key Issue:** "I don't believe that issues discriminate because of gender. We're all experiencing financial issues. With a new president taking office,

I expect a change in the tax structure. People will wish they sold now while the capital gains tax is at an all-time low. Increasing operating costs will deteriorate the bottom line and I don't expect revenues to keep up, all of which translates to a decrease in sales prices."



**JOHANNA VITTIGLIO-CHERVAK**  
Manager-Real Estate Development  
Rockefeller Group Development Corp.

Johanna Vittiglio-Chervak manages entitlements and planning for several projects at the International Trade Center in Mt. Olive; supervises day-to-day activities of the marketing team for a one million-square-foot W/D facility at Central Crossings Business Park in Bordentown; is pursuing new acquisitions throughout New Jersey; and is instrumental in overseeing due diligence for up to 400,000 square feet to be built on a 65-acre landfill in Mt. Olive.

**Key Issue:** "I believe the most important issue facing women in CRE is the lack of women. As a young woman, I wasn't aware of CRE as a field in which women could excel. It was only through a chance opportunity that I began my career. CRE is an exciting field in which I believe more women could make an impact, but to do so, young women need to be informed about the opportunities available to them."



**JOANNE VOS**  
Esquire  
Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith & Davis

Vos has successfully litigated numerous complex environmental matters predicated on the concepts of general negligence and strict liability within the context of the New Jersey Spill Compensation & Control Act. She's represented clients in both the public and private arenas, and has served as special environment counsel to the Twp. of North Brunswick. Known as a leader in environmental law, she's an active participant in numerous groups.

**Key Issue:** "The unsteady economy and inability of potential purchasers to obtain financial backing does not allow women in the field the opportunity to flourish. But the situation does force women to be creative in terms of not only marketing strategies but also finding feasible, cost-effective solutions to clients' various roadblocks in a potential transaction."



**ANN WAEGER**  
Director  
Farer Fersko

VP, secretary and director of her Westfield-based law firm, Ann Waeger is highly regarded for her knowledge and experience in CRE and environmental insurance. Counsels developers, builders and corporation on transactions, negotiation and settlement of environmental insurance, sale and redevelopment of contaminated properties and brownfields sites. She lectures and writes extensively for the business and legal communities.

**Key Issue:** "The state of our economy and impact of the credit crisis, especially in New Jersey's heavily regulated environment, have made competition for deals fierce. Women still struggling for an equal foothold in our industry must stay positive, refocus priorities and forego 'business as usual' in favor of more cost-effective avenues. Today's volatile environment knows no gender and offers no easy answers."