



**LOIS WEISS**

**REAL ESTATE** COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

# These are this year's commercial real estate MVPs

By Lois Weiss

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Diane M. Ramirez

Anne Wermiel/NY Post

Meet this year's crop of accomplished REBNY award winners.

- **The Bernard H. Mendik Lifetime Leadership in Real Estate Award — Diane M. Ramirez, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Halstead Real Estate**

For Diane Ramirez, the residential real estate business has changed in the four-plus decades she's been in business — and that's a good thing. "When I started, we were called the 'fur coat ladies,' and it was only ladies," she recalls of 1984, when she co-founded Halstead Realty Company alongside Clark Halstead. "It's amazing how many men have been attracted to this industry, and they do extremely well."

Today, Halstead has grown from three Manhattan storefronts to three dozen offices and more than 1,300 agents throughout New York City, the Hamptons, the Hudson Valley, New Jersey and Connecticut.

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REBNY has been a constant in Ramirez's career. As the group expanded to cover more residential real estate, Ramirez took on leadership roles.

She won the group's first Residential Deal of the Year award, was honored with the Henry Forster Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2007 and was the recipient of the Kenneth R. Gerrety Humanitarian Award in 2009.

Ramirez also serves as vice chairman of the board of directors for the Leading Real Estate Companies of the World. She was the recipient of its Leading RE's Leadership Award.

In 2010, Governor Cuomo appointed her to the Department of State Real Estate Board and is a state-accredited continuing education teacher.

Ramirez cultivates passions beyond real estate. She received the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter's Celine Marcus Community Service Award and was honored, along with her husband, Sam, by the Valerie Fund.

- **The Young Real Estate Professional of the Year Award — Alex Bernstein, Executive Vice President and New Business Director at Bernstein Real Estate**



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As a child in the 1980s, Alex Bernstein ran freight elevators and cleaned the hallways of buildings in his family's portfolio.

That early building maintenance training was hard work for a youngster, but gave him a sense of pride in both the buildings and the people who run them.

Today, as executive vice president and new business director at Bernstein Real Estate, Bernstein identifies new investments and oversees all operational aspects of the over 2 million square feet of property in his family's 92-year-old company.

A recent highlight is the development of the energy-efficient Passive House at 211 W. 29th St. — now the tallest building of its kind in New York City. Bernstein's goal is to duplicate the concept around the city and explore ways the project could be translated into affordable housing opportunities.

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He is also committed to improving North Chelsea — or “NoChe,” as he calls it — the neighborhood that hosts many of their buildings. Here, he has founded the eatery Till & Sprocket and is opening Interface, a multi-use event space.

Bernstein, who received his undergraduate degree from Union College and a masters of business administration from Columbia Business School, lives in New York with his wife, Pam, and his three children.

For Bernstein, the Young Men's/Women's Real Estate Association (YM/WREA) is more than business — it's family. His grandfather, Asher Bernstein, the organization's chairman in 1980, was named both Young Man of the Year and Senior Man of the Year. As women became more prominent, the award Bernstein is receiving tonight has an updated title: The Young Professional of the Year.

Bernstein, who has served both as secretary and governor of the organization, is now on the membership committee.

He wants to ensure that the group attracts members who want to be truly involved and not just add a line to their resume.

“We try to screen the applicants,” he says. “We want people in the YM/WREA who will become active and creative members and volunteer and contribute to help organize events and become leaders.”

As for Bernstein senior, he is beyond proud that this award is going to his son. The younger Bernstein jokes, “He's kvelling.”

- **The Louis Smadbeck Memorial Broker Recognition Award — Ira Z. Fishman, Partner at HSP Real Estate Group**



This will be the 46th time Ira Z. Fishman has attended REBNY's gala. But it's his first as an honoree.

Over his five decades in the industry, Fishman, now a partner at HSP Real Estate Group, says he has been on four sides of the city's commercial real estate market. He's acted as a tenant representative, an owner's representative, an agent for other owners, and has represented himself as owner of around 20 commercial and multifamily properties in New York City.

"I've seen the world from a lot of different perspectives," Fishman says.

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At this point in his career, he specializes in renovating poorly maintained buildings into prime office properties.

Prior to merging with HSP, Fishman was the CEO of EVO Real Estate Group, formerly known as Winoker Realty Property. During that time, he enhanced overall operations and scaled up its leasing and management divisions.

A 1972 graduate of Rutgers University with an economics degree, Fishman began his real estate career as an intern at Newmark & Co, eventually becoming partner and representing over 3.5 million square feet of commercial real estate.

At REBNY, Fishman serves as chair of the Midtown South Office Committee and sits on the board of directors for both REBNY's commercial brokerage division and the business improvement district known as the Garment District Alliance.

Fishman credits his long career to both his membership in REBNY and the Young Men's/Women's Real Estate Association, of which he's a past chairman. Now his daughter (and real estate partner) Dana Moskowitz is involved with both organizations.

### **• The George M. Brooker Management Executive of the Year Award — Bernard Warren, Chairman and President of Webb & Brooker**

A self-defined "worker bee," Bernard Warren, chairman and president of Webb & Brooker, spent his undergrad years at Baruch College hitting the books — and growing a business. After graduation, Warren was able to parlay his share of a college party promotion company into the ownership of numerous affordable housing complexes, by first investing in old rooming houses.

"I fell in love with real estate," explains Warren, who later obtained a graduate degree in human resources development from Fordham University. Yet Warren's road to working full-time in real estate was circuitous. In 1990, he was employed in a management position at FedEx. But through his involvement with the Greater Harlem Real Estate Board (GHREB), Warren had the opportunity to meet George M. Brooker. The conversation led to a job offer — but a quandary as it would be a 50 percent cut in income. "I had to convince my wife [that I should take the job]," Warren recalls. "She said, 'You better make sure it works.' "

It worked.

Since taking on the Webb & Brooker role as site manager of the Marcus Garvey Apartments in Brooklyn, Warren increased his responsibilities over the years while establishing close working relationships with federal, state and local housing agencies.

He is an expert in all aspects of housing policy, planning and operations. Warren conducts negotiations with contractors and monitors building budgets.



REBNY



He has implemented multimillion-dollar capital improvement programs and is an accomplished innovator focusing on operational improvements that enhance productivity, efficiency and quality of life.

Winning this award is especially meaningful given Warren's mentorship by Brooker, who in 1977 was its first recipient. It was Brooker who suggested Warren join REBNY and in 2010, Warren received its Residential Management Community Service Award.

"Part of what you do in business is to interact with your colleagues," Warren says. "REBNY makes sure you have updates on all the laws and how to implement them."

Today, Warren serves on REBNY's Board of Governors, its Residential Management Council and is co-chair of its Diversity Working Group.

Having grown up in South Jamaica, Queens, he stays close to his roots as the vice president of the board of managers for the Jamaica YMCA.

- **The Kenneth R. Gerrety Humanitarian Award — Helena Rose, Principal of the Durst Organization**



REBNY

For Helena Rose Durst, principal of the Durst Organization, real estate begins from the ground up — literally. While she oversees all aspects of the company's residential portfolio, including leasing, management, operations and marketing, she's passionate about innovating ways to utilize and maximize resources for the most positive environmental impact.

Currently, Durst oversees the collection of kitchen waste from their properties on West 57th Street, which is brought to the family's organic farm in Dutchess County to be composted and then used for green roofs.

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"Whenever possible, we lay down green roofs across our residential and commercial buildings," says Durst. Beehives are also being placed on some rooftops. That honey is given as gifts to new tenants, and used as ingredients by WellPlated, the food hall in the developer's Times Square office building.

This innovative thinking is emblematic of Durst's career. She's led the management of nearly 2,500 units of rental housing, including the West 57th Street and Front Street projects. She has spearheaded the creation of both market-rate and affordable units across Durst's residential portfolio, including the leasing and development pipeline at the company's Halletts Point complex in Astoria. Durst was also president of the New York Water Taxi/Circle Line Downtown until its sale.

Durst, who sits on the REBNY Board of Governors, has fond memories of attending galas with her father and grandfather. And now that she's an honoree, she knows it's a pipe dream to expect a quiet room. "The award is definitely an honor, but the speaking is a challenge," says Durst of the notoriously festive event.

- **The John E. Zuccotti Public Service Award — Carol Kellermann, President of the Citizens Budget Commission**



REBNY

With three decades of leadership positions in the nonprofit, philanthropic and government worlds, Carol Kellermann exemplifies the attributes of this REBNY award, which goes to an individual who has displayed exceptional accomplishments and services in the public's interest.

Kellermann, a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, has served as deputy commissioner of the City's Department of Finance. She was also the executive director and CEO of the September 11 Fund, overseeing the over \$500 million in funds for victims of the attacks.

Since 2008, Kellermann has been president of the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), which aims to hold politicians accountable for their spending.

She has also served as executive director of Learning Leaders, a public school volunteer program, as the interim executive director for the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers and as a consultant to the City University of New York.

A REBNY member, she considers the group an "important institution."

She recommends young students and executives get involved in various business associations like REBNY and the CBC's Young Leaders Society. "Join anything that will give exposure to like-minded people and to issues that confront city

government," she advises.

- **The Harry B. Helmsley Distinguished New Yorker Award — Daniel R. Tishman, Principal Owner and Vice Chairman of Tishman Hotel and Realty**



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“One hundred and twenty years ago, this city was good to us,” says Daniel R. Tishman, principal owner and vice chairman of Tishman Hotel and Realty, as well as its many privately held affiliated companies. “You had to work hard, and I learned from my father that it’s incredibly important to give back.”

That’s why the executive fits in an impressive roster of volunteer commitments outside his corporate duties, which also include serving on the board of directors of AECOM (which merged with Tishman in 2010) and the board of Montefiore Medicine.

A dedicated New Yorker, Tishman is the vice chairman of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and was previously chairman of Governor Cuomo’s Airport Advisory Panel.

A graduate of Evergreen State College with a bachelor’s degree in ecology and planning and an Master of Science from Lesley University in environmental studies, Tishman is committed to ecological causes. He spent over a decade as chairman of the board of the National Resource Council and sits on the board of the Conservation Fund.

“I always do charity work,” says Tishman. “You fit it in.”

As he leads the family’s real estate holdings, Tishman builds on the achievements of the past. His father, the late John Tishman, believed in the benefits of new construction technology and founded the affiliated Tishman Research — installing the first commercially available motion sensors, among other advances.

Tishman looks to innovation now, too, and considers artificial intelligence and robotics the future of the industry.

He is also actively involved with REBNY, and has been a long-serving member of the Board of Governors as well as the Executive Committee.