



Women Leaders of Real Estate: Ann Gray On The 5 Things You Need To Succeed In The Real Estate Industry



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Surveying, as a profession, must be more diverse and inclusive to properly respond to the needs of the communities we serve. Having diverse role models as mentors and in senior positions is imperative to improve these numbers. This is why companies must aggressively promote a more diverse population of emerging professionals, and not just females.

As *a part of my series about strong women leaders of the Real Estate industry, I had the pleasure of interviewing Ann Gray, FRICS, FAIA*

Ann became RICS President-Elect in September 2021. She acts as a key ambassador responsible for driving thought leadership across the profession, helping to deliver RICS' goal of creating positive social impact in the built environment. Alongside her RICS activities, Ann is a real estate broker and licensed architect in Los Angeles, California. In her capacity as a real estate advisor, she brings over 25 years' experience of professional leadership to her role.

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Can you tell us the “backstory” about what brought you to the Real Estate industry?

I grew up in California and received my bachelor’s degree in Applied Mathematics from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). While I enjoyed math, I began to miss being able to express myself creatively and I began to pursue a Master’s of Architecture. After joining a firm, I realized that I could do more with my experience and thought that it might be fulfilling to sit on the owner’s side of the table, to nurture talent in others.

While a career in real estate was never my intention, I began found I was good at working within sometimes difficult parameters including tight budgets, short schedules, and meeting public expectations. As in architecture, these parameters give real estate ventures the foundation for a successful outcome and I consider the act of optimizing conflicting goals to be a satisfying creative pursuit.

None of us can achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

Having grown up with a father who was a Professor of Linguistics, we spent much of my childhood traveling across the globe including living for at time in Athens, Greece and in Greenwich, England where he undertook academic research sabbaticals. During our travels, we often visited the world’s great historic sites and monuments. My father encouraged my siblings and me to

appreciate diverse cultures, explore cities and discover the built environment that surrounds us, always finding a way to make it interesting.

At home in the evenings, my dad would sketch his perfect house which inspired him to begin remodeling our home with the help of the family, watching my parents' vision come to life. My brother and I would scour nearby construction sites to pick up leftover nails in buckets to use on our own house. Little did I know, I was learning about construction and real estate from the ground up. My father would often take us through half-built houses, so early on, I had a sense of what deconstructed houses were like — I learned the process of building from the ground up.

My mother often claimed there were not enough women in design. Between the two of them my future in building was inevitable.

Thank you. Let's now jump to the main core of our interview. The Real Estate industry, unlike the Veterinarian, Nursing and Public Relations fields, is not a women-dominated industry. In fact, only about 30 percent of positions in Real Estate companies are held by women. In your opinion or experience, what do you think is the cause of this imbalance?

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be more diverse and inclusive to properly respond to the needs of the communities we serve. Having diverse role models as mentors and in senior positions is imperative to improve these numbers. This is why companies must aggressively promote a more diverse population of emerging professionals, and not just females.

What do you think makes your company stand out? Can you share a story?

My company, Gray Real Estate Advisors, stands out because I have an unusual background as both an architect and a real estate broker. This gives me the ability to problem solve from a quantitative as well as a qualitative perspective. I provide a valuable understanding of the consequences of decisions being made from the top down as well as the bottom up.

I have always admired and valued the RICS global mission of providing standards of professionalism to increase the impact we can have improving development and improving lives. RICS stands out because it promotes and enforces the highest professional qualifications and standards in the development, valuation, and management of land, real estate, construction, and infrastructure — a wide range of property professions. During my tenure as President-Elect, I plan to continue to promote ethical behavior and that includes diversity and sustainability, critical underpinnings of an ethical practice.

From dirt to disposition, RICS is working towards solving global issues through its World Built Environment Forum, a leading-edge knowledge community that helps ensure markets operate in the best interests of society.

Additionally, through its Global Commercial Property Monitor RICS collects market sentiment data from its large membership who have become a

leading barometer of what is set to happen. This global scope helps influence public policy decisionmakers as well as banks and financial institutions. RICS collaborates with multiple worldwide organizations to improve standards, provide frameworks for governments and organizations to adopt helping guide investors to advance the public interest.

Are you working on anything exciting right now?

I recently spoke at a conference regarding building a sustainable and climate resilient future in the Cayman Islands. As you may know, research suggests significant human and economic impact from rising sea-levels in Cayman in the coming decades. Discussing actions with colleagues on topics like this are exciting and incredibly gratifying, considering the global impact success will have on future generations. Cities continue to consume 78% of the world's resources and produce more than 60% of greenhouse gas emissions. These figures illustrate the centrality of built environment professionals to the management and mitigation of climate-related risk.

To support the sector in addressing its carbon output, RICS, in coalition with 49 globally prominent organizations, released a world first for cost and carbon management in infrastructure called ICMS3. For the first time, there is a globally consistent method for carbon life-cycle reporting across construction projects, from buildings and bridges to ports and offshore structures. This report will help efforts to decarbonize the construction sector in the most cost-effective way. The [RICS Redbook](#) now includes guidance on incorporating sustainability and future risk into core property valuation mechanics. Inclusion of this data can help build a consistent database to help guide future development.

In addition, there is now a substantial body of insight, guidance, and resources that RICS professionals and others in the industry can draw on to build capability and help deliver a practical response to the great challenge that climate change presents for the public.

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Thank you so much for the time you spent with this. We wish you only continued success!



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