

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

Women
of Influence IN
CONSTRUCTION
COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE
AND DESIGN

Welcome to the third edition of our annual section honoring San Diego’s most influential women in construction, commercial real estate and design. The San Diego Business Journal is proud to highlight the women building, selling and designing properties in America’s Finest City. Listed alphabetically in the pages that follow are female industry professionals in the region, along with highlights about their careers and achievements.

Congratulations to these extraordinary, talented professionals who made the list and thank you for your contributions to San Diego’s economy!

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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE IN CONSTRUCTION, COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE AND DESIGN

**JESSICA KIMBRELL**

Director, Facilities and Construction
Escondido Union School District

Jessica Kimbrell has been instrumental in the modernization and construction of several educational facilities within the Escondido Union School District. She directed the construction of a two-story building at Mission Middle School that significantly improved the learning environment for science, technology, engineering, and math subjects.

At Orange Glen Elementary School, she directed the construction of two classroom facilities for kindergarten and special education students. Her efforts also resulted in beautification of the campus and a new playground for students. At Del Dios Academy of Arts and Sciences, she directed the construction of a two-story classroom facility that provided a state-of-the-art learning facility and enabled the relocation of students from temporary classroom spaces.

Under a community bond program, Kimbrell also led many other projects that improved school site safety and security and information technology infrastructure. Her leadership has been influential and has resulted in a long-lasting and positive outcome for the students of Escondido Union School District and the community as a whole. She can be reached at jkimbrell@eusd.org.

**TIFFANY LABRUNO**

Director of Professional Services
Gafcon Inc.

Tiffany LaBruno, director of professional services at Gafcon Inc., has more than 20 years of facilities and construction technology experience. The construction industry trails behind all others in the use of technology, but Tiffany leads the charge to stay ahead. She ensures these technologies transform the building lifecycle to make construction cheaper and faster, while improving quality through a focus on processes and technologies. They also make projects safer, so clients can save on insurance premiums.

Last year, LaBruno proposed the use of mobile technologies for the San Diego Regional Airport - Terminal 1 project. In 2019, LaBruno was the keynote speaker at the Engineering News-Record's (ENR) FutureTech Conference.

Recent statistics show that only 26% of leadership roles in technology are held by women and that women represent only 9.1% of people employed in construction. Thus, Tiffany refers to herself as a unicorn, as she is female in both tech and construction — which is incredibly rare. She can be reached at tlabruno@gafcon.com.

**ALEXANDRA LAPADULA**

Senior Project Manager
BNBuilders

Alessandra Lapadula, LEED AP is currently one of San Diego's highest profile construction leaders, helping to lead the construction efforts for UC San Diego's Design & Innovation Building, which will serve as UC San Diego's new "front door" when two new Light Rail Transit stations come to the La Jolla campus.

Lapadula joined the BNBuilders' team in San Diego in 2016 as a Senior Project Manager, and immediately became a crucial leader for the construction of Vertex Pharmaceuticals' San Diego Research Center. Lapadula also spent numerous years handling complex projects at Stanford University.

Lapadula has 23 years of industry experience. In her senior project management role, she oversees developments from pre-construction to close-out, manages the entire project team, and serves as a key liaison between the owner and other stakeholders. She is also responsible for mapping out schedules, budgets, and subcontractors for new pursuits. Lapadula earned her bachelor's in Civil Engineering from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and her master's in Civil Engineering/Construction Management from San Jose State University. She can be reached at Alessandra.Lapadula@bnbuilders.com.

**PAMELA LEONARD**

Project Executive - Site Utilities
ACCO Engineered Systems

Pamela Leonard oversees ACCO Engineered Systems Site Utility department. She came to ACCO with 25 years of site utility experience and extensive knowledge in developing and growing the business.

Construction has always been a part of Leonard's life. Growing up, her father ran a Plumbing/Mechanical company, which is where her career began. There, with mentorship from her father and peers, she learned all aspects of the business from operations to project management to estimating and beyond. She managed and grew the site utility division, expanded the company's fleet of earth-moving equipment, allowing the company to take on large projects and developed a highly respected industry reputation. The company experienced a substantial impact from effects caused by the 2009 recession and had to close its doors. Two and a half years ago, she made the move to ACCO, leading the site utility department and fostering an atmosphere of true teamwork, support and ambition. She can be reached at pleonard@accoes.com.



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

Congratulations to Swinerton's very own **Liz Hawkins** and **Monika Iannone** on being named two of *San Diego Business Journal's Influential Women in Construction, Commercial Real Estate & Design!* We are extremely proud of their contributions not only to our firm, but as two of the most passionate and innovative individuals in the construction industry as a whole. As women comprise only 10% of the industry workforce, Swinerton wholeheartedly supports Liz and Monika's goal to inspire women to bridge the gap and empower them to join the industry.

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WOMEN OF INFLUENCE IN CONSTRUCTION, COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE AND DESIGN

**RASHMI MENON**

Vice President and General Manager
Burns & McDonnell

Rashmi Menon is vice president and general manager for Burns & McDonnell in California. Burns & McDonnell is a 100% employee-owned engineering, architecture and construction firm.

Menon has more than 20 years of experience in leading diverse teams to deliver innovative solutions for clients in the transportation, aviation, transit, energy, industrial and municipal markets. She has a track record for success in delivering large capital improvement airport programs.

She has a passion for fostering collaborative teams and celebrating diverse perspectives. Menon leads the team in providing innovative and resilient infrastructure solutions.

Her extensive community involvement includes the Women's Transportation Seminar and Conference of Minority Transportation Officials. She is deeply passionate about giving back to the community and supporting the next generation of women leaders.

She earned her master's degree in construction management from Texas A&M University and her bachelor's degree in architecture from the College of Engineering, Trivandrum, in India. She can be reached at (657) 205-0601.

**ANGELA MERRILL YON**

Principal
Boretto+Merrill Consulting, LLC

Merrill Yon has been a leader in the Southern California real estate market for more than 20 years. A civil engineering graduate of The University of Michigan, she has designed custom homes, golf courses, and entitled, designed, permitted and built several high density developments throughout San Diego and Southern California.

As director of acquisitions and area vice president for K. Hovnanian Homes, she oversaw acquisition of single-family residential communities, high-rise developments and mixed-use properties throughout Southern California as well as all aspects of design development, entitlement and permitting, construction, sales, and customer service. She led the traditional suburban homebuilder into the national urban market by developing its first three urban projects, all located in downtown San Diego and totaling over 600 units. After K. Hovnanian Homes, Merrill Yon became a principal at Boretto + Merrill, a woman owned DBE Certified business, focused on assisting clients with acquisition of assets, proforma budgeting and cost estimating, entitlements, construction management and project close out. She can be reached at angela@borettoemerrill.com.

**KATERINA MILOVANOSKA**

Director, BIM/VDC
Gafcon, Inc.

Katerina Milovanoska is an influential proponent of shifting the mindset of the AEC industry to use datacentric Building information Modeling (BIM) and Virtual Design and Construction (VDC). Her perspective assists clients in turning digital architectural design models into three-dimensional reference models, containing the information and details the construction team needs to build structures while mitigating risk. Milovanoska comes from Macedonia and holds a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering, and Geodesy in Sofia, Bulgaria. She speaks four languages: Bulgarian, English, Macedonian, and Serbian/Croatian.

Milovanoska is a member of the Education and Programs Committee with the San Diego Chapter of Commercial Real-Estate Women (CREW), a member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) including their Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI), a member of Design Build Institute of America (DBIA), as well as a member of the Downtown San Diego Partnership (DSDP) as part of their Downtown Planning & Public Policy Committee. She can be reached at kmilovanoska@gafcon.com.

**ROUNAK MOFTY**

Operations Director – Commercial Real Estate
Intersection

Rounak Mofty is Operations Director at Intersection with responsibilities including marketing, human resources and office management. Mofty is integral to ensuring the transparency and responsiveness for which Intersection is renowned. As Director of Operations, she has helped grow the company from six people to a full-service commercial real estate firm with four offices throughout the Western United States with 32 people.

With over 10 years of experience in commercial and residential real estate, she also provides indispensable assistance to the firm's managing partners. She was previously honored by the San Diego Daily Transcript as one of San Diego's Most Influential Leaders. Mofty received her master's degree in public administration, with an emphasis on administration of justice, from San Diego State University. Her bachelor's degree, also in administration of justice, came from San Jose State University. Mofty speaks both Kurdish and Farsi. When she's not hard at work, she enjoys cooking, traveling abroad and painting. She can be reached at rmofty@intersectioncre.com.



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CONGRATULATIONS LISA BITTNER

San Diego Business Journal
Women of Influence
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NOVA Services, Inc.
applauds your accomplishments!

Thank you for your hard work and your contributions
to our clients and our company.
We are honored to have you on our team.

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE IN CONSTRUCTION, COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE AND DESIGN



KATIE POPOLOW

Managing Principal – Architecture/Engineering
The Miller Hull Partnership

Katie Popolow joined The Miller Hull Partnership in 2000 and serves as managing principal of the firm's San Diego studio. With 30 years of experience in the architecture industry, she manages a variety of project types including administration facilities, cultural spaces, higher education, K-12 schools, public safety and sustainable infrastructure.

Popolow also leads the firm's Process and Delivery Committee, working to improve office deliverables and staff educational opportunities. She makes a priority of meeting with all project managers bi-weekly to discuss the status of project efficiency and current and potential resources.

Currently Popolow serves as president of the DBIA Northwest Region and advisor to the DBIA San Diego Board of Directors. Additionally, she is an active member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the San Diego Architecture Foundation and the San Diego Green Building Council, as well as the Downtown San Diego Partnership and the Urban Land Institute of San Diego-Tijuana. She can be reached at kpopolow@millerhull.com.



JESSICA PRIETTO MAHON

Vice President of Administration
Level 3 Construction Inc.

A perfect match for a diverse range of responsibilities, Jessica Prietto Mahon is the engine that keeps Level 3 Construction moving ahead in the back office. As an experienced hospitality manager, she runs the company's human resources and staffing demand, supervises its accounting group, assists with bid and proposal, coordinates with subcontractors and suppliers, and stays abreast of governmental construction regulations from the local to federal levels.

As a native San Diegan, she always seems to have the knowledge of unlimited resources and suppliers.

Since launching the business in 2006 with her husband, she managed to not only keep multiple tasks ongoing, but to raise three children at the same time.

Level 3 Construction is a well-established, multimillion-dollar commercial construction firm due to her day to day oversight. Founded in 2006 by President and CEO Ian Mahon, the company is located in Vista and privately owned. She can be reached at jprietto@level3construction.com.

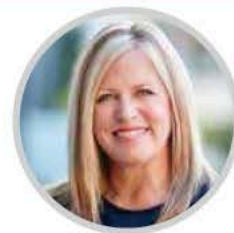


LIZETTE RODRIGUEZ

Labor Relations Manager
Gafcon Inc.

Lizette Rodriguez is the labor relations manager and labor relations business line leader at Gafcon Inc. She has extensive experience in all areas of contract compliance monitoring, auditing and the enforcement of rules for state and federally funded projects. She has been with Gafcon for more than 10 years working with contractors, subcontractors and organized labor representatives in resolving challenging compliance issues.

Rodriguez has participated in and facilitated various public works and labor compliance training classes sponsored by the Department of Industrial Relations, the Department of Labor, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards, San Diego County and other organizations. She is on the Barrio Logan "Building a Community Vision" team and was a part of the C&C Mentor Protégé program focused on enhancing growth and opportunities for small local businesses. She is involved in several building industry organizations. Rodriguez received her degree in paralegal studies at Maric College and is a licensed paralegal. She can be reached at lrodriguez@gafcon.com.



JILL RUSSELL-LAYMAN

Associate Principal
ID Studios Inc.

Jill Russell-Layman received her BFA in Interior Design from the Design Institute of San Diego in 2003 and joined ID Studios in 2006. She has continuously exhibited her commitment to the success of the firm and the happiness of its staff. She has been involved in the community since the beginning of her design career, developing ID Studios' internship program and mentoring dozens of interns. She's participated in numerous charity events and has been a member of many organizations such as the IIDA, CREW, NAIOP, Biocom and the SDHR Forum.

In January 2020, she joined ID Studios' ownership team as Associate Principal. "In addition to directing some of ID Studios' most significant projects such as the recently completed Fish & Richardson offices located in Del Mar, Jill participates in the day-to-day business operations of the firm. We are thrilled that Jill has expanded her leadership role at ID Studios," said Founding-Principal Amy Morway. She can be reached at layman@idstudiosinc.com.

PORT of SAN DIEGO
Waterfront of Opportunity

Congratulations to our very own

**Joan Siao
Lucy Contreras
Noemi Aquino**

on being named
Women of Influence in
Construction, Commercial Real
Estate & Design

We're all proud of you!

portofsandiego.org

CONGRATULATIONS TO

JENNIFER MONTGOMERY

San Diego Business Journal's
Outstanding Woman in
Construction and Design

We at Schmidt Design Group celebrate Jennifer's leadership within our office and in the regional design community. Her continued accomplishments bring about Positive Change in the spaces where we live, work and play. Thank you for being such an integral and influential part of our team.

Congratulations to all the incredible women making a difference in our communities!

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