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## Brenda Dohring-Hicks

President & CEO  
 The Dohring Group  
 Tampa

Nominated by:

- Penny Hulbert, Links Financial, Tampa
- Lisa Collado, CREW Tampa Bay
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- Bob Zegota, Grubb & Ellis, Tampa
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In 2006, Brenda Dohring-Hicks' boutique appraisal firm - The Dohring Group - provided valuations for more than \$200 million of commercial real estate. National, local and community banks and other financial institutions rely on her expertise, and she provides expert testimony in legal cases to determine value, both for eminent domain cases as well as general valuation cases.

Quite a change, you might say, from the early days of her career.

"I was previously in the restaurant business, and I also taught traditional classic dance. That was in my mid-20s. I kind of looked around and said I really liked real estate, but I wanted to be somewhere I could have a professional career," she said.

As providence would have it, Dohring-Hicks soon met the Tampa Bay division president for US Home, who started her down a path toward a new calling.

"He gave me a referral to an appraisal company in Tampa. I was hired there and then started my first appraisal company in 1987," she said.

Dohring-Hicks later founded her second company, The Dohring Group Inc., which in turn provided the impetus for yet another new venture - RealWired Inc. - providing a proprietary software package designed to help appraisers and other commercial real estate professionals track data on comparable sales.

"It was the brain child of The Dohring Group. Back in the mid-'90s, images first became visible on our computers. It was quite a shock at the time. For people in real estate doing research all the time, it was amazing," she said.

Dohring-Hicks and her associates began to create a national database of commercial real estate sales comps. Her company became one of many trying to take advantage of the Internet to make commercial real estate transactions more efficient.

"The goal in commercial real estate is to streamline the process. It's very cumbersome, and it involves many people and lots of documents and an inordinate number of conversations," she said.

Dohring-Hicks took her idea into the venture capital world and obtained a commitment of several million dollars to launch the new company. She was ready to sign on the dotted line when the stock market crash began in March 2000.

"That was the best thing that ever happened to me. We never had to take that funding. We continued to bootstrap the organization and grow it organically. Otherwise, we would have lost everything," she said.

Dohring-Hicks said learning - and the associated rewards - are what keep her focused on commercial real estate.

"It's my curiosity. I have a thirst for and a belief in ongoing, constant learning. I can't help myself. And the money ain't bad," she said.

"The more money I make, the better everyone around me will be. I think that's really important. A lot of people associate money with its negative side, and I've done that in my life as well. But when you're poor, you can't help anybody. When you make a lot of money, you can help more people."

Dohring-Hicks has expanded The Dohring Group's horizons into development, showing her passion for urban renewal. She purchased and restored a 100-year-old building in downtown Tampa that serves as the company's headquarters and also serves as innovative office space for emerging growth companies, both in real estate and technology.

She also purchased and renovated a former 20,000sf Walgreens building in downtown Tampa that she converted to office and retail condos. She started the Uptown Council in 2006, which represents building owners in downtown Tampa and works to promote Downtown Tampa as a vital community.

"I really love my neighborhood, and downtown is my neighborhood," she said.

And as the company has expanded to do more brokerage and consulting work, Dohring-Hicks' daughter and son have joined her in the business.

"It's nice to have that growth. We have become a niche commercial real estate company that provides traditional services and the technology you need to run commercial real estate. It's not such a big step as it used to be," she said.

Dohring-Hicks has written numerous articles and been featured in a variety of news sources. She also writes and publishes a nationally distributed newsletter on commercial real estate and technology.

She is active in the Tampa chapter of Commercial Real Estate Women and is a member of the Appraisal Institute and Tampa's Downtown Partnership.

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