

LANI BAKER

Principal Partner, Chief Financial Officer
Holualoa Companies

By Romi Carrell Wittman



Lani Baker doesn't like to sit still.

"I don't like being bored," she said. "I'm always learning something new or taking on a different challenge."

That's precisely how she became Principal Partner and CFO of Holualoa Companies, a real estate investment firm with global assets.

Adapting to change is Baker's second nature. At the University of Arizona, she originally selected psychology as her major. "When you're at that age, it's fascinating to you. But I quickly switched."

After graduating from UArizona's Eller College of Management with an accounting degree, Baker hit the job market. Holualoa quickly snapped her up and she's thrived there for the past 22 years.

"Holualoa has a very collaborative culture," she said. "It allows everyone to have a seat at the table." Baker added that this inclusive culture allowed her to learn and contribute to numerous projects.

Rick Kauffman, CEO of Holualoa Companies, said Baker's contributions are critical to the company's continued success. "Lani's skill and work ethic have been integral to Holualoa's success. We are fortunate to have her as a partner."

With several projects in the pipeline, Baker keeps busy. "We're about to break ground on our newest hotel development in North Phoenix," she said. The company is also developing several multifamily projects in Phoenix and Tucson.

Baker acknowledges that the historically male-dominated commercial real estate industry can be challenging for women. "Twenty years ago, I would go into meeting and I'd be one of the few or the only woman in the room. That has changed. Creating change is creating progress."

Baker attributes her success not only to her partners at Holualoa, but also professional organizations like Commercial Real Estate Women in Tucson. "CREW is a great organization to help women in real estate progress. I've made lifelong friends and it's great to see the organization grow and achieve its mission."

Baker is chair of ULI Arizona's Mixed Use Product Council, a member of TMC Health Foundation and a member of Angel Charity for Children. She's also a former board member for the Lupus Foundation of Southern Arizona.

Her advice to young women is simple: Be curious. "Don't be afraid to not know something. Learn processes and procedures. Raise your hand."

She hopes women realize it's possible to have a successful career, engage in community organizations, and be a wife and mother. "I'm not always successful in keeping all the balls in the air. But, if one of them falls, you can always pick it up and throw it a little higher."

PHOTO BY CHRIS MOONEY