

Thrust into top role, HB Nitkin chairwoman thrives

By: [Jennifer Bissell](#)

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When Helen Nitkin started a real estate development firm in 1985 with her husband, she didn't expect that one day she would be running the show by herself as a female executive in a male-dominated field.

"Going from sounding board to decision maker has been an evolution and a transition," Nitkin said. "Basically, you have to become a decision maker and a delegator."

Today, HB Nitkin Group is a real estate investment, development and management firm based in Greenwich that primarily invests in commercial retail property. But originally Nitkin started her career as a real estate broker as her husband practiced law as a real estate attorney in New York.

In the early 1980s, the couple started buying New York City condominiums and began growing a business that would eventually lead them into commercial real estate in Connecticut.

"It was the sort of the synergy and energy in our relationship that made it work," Nitkin said of her late husband, Bradley. "We were willing to take the risks and we had very compatible but different skill sets."

But after her husband was diagnosed with cancer and passed away, in 2009 Nitkin found herself head of a company she was no longer actively involved in, as she had chosen to take

time to raise her and her husband's two children. Nitkin was charged with steering a company through a collapsed real estate market and an economic recession.

Through selective investments and working with tenants to insure their tenancy, HB Nitkin survived the downturn and even secured its 15-year-average occupancy rate of more than 95 percent across its portfolio of properties. Nitkin said the firm takes pride in its commitment to long-term relationships and first-rate properties.

In December, the group announced its property, 1 Fawcett Place in Greenwich, had secured seven new leases, bringing the occupancy rate to 100 percent. The rent at the property is twice the amount it was when the group acquired the property more than a decade ago.

Additionally, the company is getting ready for the residential phase of its downtown revitalization project with the city of Hartford.

"I really like everything about this business," Nitkin said, mentioning the work that goes into designing and financing a development. "I like that Hartford is a creative project and you know you're affecting a change in a downtown area."

Once completed, Adriaen's Landing in Hartford will include 150,000 square feet of space for restaurants,

entertainment and retail, and up to 27,000 square feet for 115 residential units.



Helen Nitkin

"It's taking an unloved property and (making it) loved," Nitkin said. "Hartford is a city people have forgotten about. But people are starting to take notice. We're part of that transformation."

Looking ahead, Nitkin said she's devoted to the future of the company and leading it in the right direction. Her children, ages 25 and 23, have expressed interest in continuing the family business.

"I'm fully committed to running the business as it's always been and into the future," Nitkin said.