

I Heart REBNY. Here's Why.

This Thursday night the real estate community will come together to celebrate 2017 at the Real Estate Board of New York's annual banquet. This year will be REBNY's 122nd celebration.

I was always told, and have come to learn, that real estate is a relationship business, and to build the best relationships, networking is a key ingredient. Phone calls, emails and hard mailings are essential, but nothing creates and solidifies relationships more than face-to-face interaction. While there are many great forums for networking, being a member of REBNY and actively participating in its events is among the best relationship building activities someone interested in the New York City real estate market can do.

REBNY's mission is to protect, improve and advance the business of real estate in New York City. It not only advocates for our industry but also provides unparalleled educational opportunities for all of its members. The board consists of about 17,000 members coming from every possible corner of the industry. Membership comprises commercial, residential and institutional property owners, builders and managers, investors, brokers and

salespeople, banks, financial institutions, attorneys, architects, contractors, title insurance companies, environmental and engineering firms and other organizations and individuals interested in engaging in the real estate business in New York City.

My brokerage career began in 1984 and one of the first things I wanted to do was join REBNY. Its reputation at the time was stellar, and it has only grown and been enhanced since. My first tangible experience with the board was to become a member of the Sales Brokers Committee. Jack Hill ran committee memberships back then, and I still feel sorry for Jack based on the dozens of calls Paul Massey—co-founder of the former Massey Knakal Realty Services with me—and I harassed him with when we were aggressively seeking membership on that committee. We were fortunate enough to become members of the Sales Brokers Committee, which afforded us the opportunity to become friendly with so many active senior investment sales brokers whom Paul and I admired. It also allowed us

to forge friendships with many younger sales brokers, many of whom we still count among our friends all of these decades later.

As my involvement with REBNY grew, I was able to participate on many different

committees, which greatly enhanced my relationships with top people in the industry. Over the years I have been fortunate to have served on the Sales Brokers Committee, the Ethics & Professional Practices Committee, the Economic Development Committee, the Transportation Committee, the Seminar Committee on Domestic and International Markets and

the Arbitration Committee. I was honored in 2000 to be appointed to the Board of Governors and have served in that capacity since. In addition I have been serving as the vice president of the Commercial Brokerage Division since 2010 and have served on the board's Executive Committee. My growth with REBNY has mirrored my professional growth, and there is no doubt that I owe much of my success over the years to my



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involvement with them.

In addition to the educational opportunities presented by the board, the advocacy that the board provides has successfully advanced the interests of our industry. Recent achievements are too numerous to mention here but are highlighted by REBNY's invaluable input into shaping the final version of Midtown East rezoning and the Affordable New York Housing Program (the new version of 421a). Rob Speyer recently completed a spectacularly successful run as REBNY chairman and has handed the reins to Billy Rudin who brings with him tremendous insights from both a local and national perspective. With John Banks as president, I am confident this track record of success will continue to grow.

If you are, or aspire to be, active in the New York City real estate market and are not a member of REBNY, I urge you to consider joining. It will do wonderful things for your career by enhancing old relationships, creating new ones and helping you to look at the real estate world in a different way.

Robert Knakal is the chairman of New York investment sales for Cushman & Wakefield.