



Vanessa Murray

Divisional Executive: Property Finance

Can you tell us about your background and how you ended up with Nedbank CIB's property finance team?

From an early age, I was drawn to the financial world and always knew I wanted to qualify as a chartered accountant. I hadn't quite envisaged what this would look like, but after completing my articles, I worked in the UK for a couple of years and was exposed to the banking world. I decided this seemed quite interesting and when I came back to South Africa, I started looking for opportunities within banking. My career began as a credit manager, which was an invaluable experience. I learned the ropes in banking from the ground up, working across various roles in the credit and country risk environment. These formative years gave me a solid technical foundation and taught me the importance of building long-term partnerships.

I started out in the property finance space in 2009 and ever since then, I have found it extremely rewarding, interesting, and challenging. I joined Nedbank in 2018 and was immediately attracted to the team's high-performing, values-driven culture and, the fact that it is the market leader and a key supporter of the sector. I look after our Gauteng lending business, and we have led some of the largest property deals in the market.

What makes property finance a unique and fulfilling space to work in?

Property is more than bricks and mortar. Every transaction we support creates a ripple effect, whether it's new homes, jobs, commercial activity, or improved urban infrastructure. I love the strategic

complexity of it; balancing short-term viability with long-term vision. You're not just funding a development; you're investing in its future and the communities surrounding it. Seeing the outcome on the ground is incredibly fulfilling. Driving past a development you helped bring to life, whether it's an affordable housing project, a retail centre in a township, or a green building in the CBD, reminds you of the real-world impact of our work. Today, I'm proud to be part of a team that doesn't just fund buildings but helps shape communities.

What are some of the biggest lessons you've learnt in leadership?

Leadership isn't about having all the answers; it's about creating space for others to bring their best ideas forward. My job is to ensure that I support my team and help them navigate the challenges they encounter. I try to lead with empathy and purpose, listening actively, setting clear expectations, and recognising that people thrive in different ways. Resilience is built over time. Not every project goes according to plan, but by staying open, transparent, and focused on the end goal, you can navigate uncertainty with integrity.

Nedbank CIB's property team is one of the most transformed in the sector and is led by women. Is that part of its strength?

Absolutely. Our team's diversity is one of its biggest strengths. Different perspectives drive better problem-solving and the generation of new ideas. Having 4 women in our leadership team in property finance is rare in this industry, and at Nedbank, it's something we're very proud of. We're committed to growing talent and we're now focusing on the next level of women coming up through the ranks. We are investing in mentorship, transferring skills, and providing stretch opportunities. Diversity can't be a tick-box; it's essential and a leadership asset. We've all benefited from women who paved the way, and my colleagues and I hope to do the same for others.

What advice would you give to young professionals entering this space?

Stay curious. Property finance is constantly evolving, so keep learning.

Be patient, as deals, relationships, and growth take time. Don't be afraid to bring your whole self to the table. Early in my career, I felt the pressure to fit in, but I realised my voice and perspective was different and that's okay. Women often wait to be 100% ready before stepping up. Don't wait. Be brave, even when you don't feel ready. Opportunities don't come up all the time, so you must back yourself and go for it.

What are you most proud of in your career so far?

I'm proud of the team we've built, where excellence and inclusion go hand in hand. Although it's a high-performing and competitive environment, it is not cut-throat; it's about helping people grow and being deliberate. I'm also proud of the deals that made a difference, not just commercially but socially. When a project unlocks affordable housing, revitalises an inner-city area, or brings essential services closer to communities, it's rewarding and you know your work matters.

What keeps you grounded outside of work?

I'm a wife, mother, and daughter. Relaxation for me involves spending time with my family and good friends. I need other people around me to give me perspective and energise me. I read every night, fiction or non-fiction, and that allows me to switch off, and of course exercise is important to help me blow off some steam! Being a mother has taught me more about leadership and what's important than any book ever could, reminding me daily of the importance of patience, clarity, and presence.

How do you hope to be remembered, professionally?

I'd like to be remembered as someone who led with purpose, uplifted others, and left things better than how she found them. Even if I've helped just 1 person see what's possible for them, especially in an industry that hasn't always been inclusive, then I've done my job well.

