

Growth in the Miami Market

An Interview with Donna Abood,
Principal and Managing Director, Miami, Avison Young

COMPANY BRIEF Avison Young (avisonyoung.com) is a leading commercial real estate services firm, headquartered in Toronto, Canada, that provides investment sales, leasing, advisory, management, financing and mortgage placement services to owners and occupiers of office, retail, industrial, multi-family and hospitality properties.



Donna Abood

EDITORS' NOTE Donna Abood previously served as Chair and Founding Partner of Colliers International South Florida, which was formed in 2002 when she merged her firm, Abood & Associates, Inc. with Wood-Fay Realty Group. Before then, she was Vice-President of Terranova Corporation. Abood graduated from Florida State University in 1981 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in marketing and management.

How strong is Avison Young's presence in Miami?

Miami's economic engine is extremely strong and running well. Entrepreneurial development in Miami is among the strongest in the country. This has led to a tremendous number of startup businesses, especially in the technology industry. Due to its geographic location, Miami is also one of the top U.S. cities to host Latin American headquarters for Latin American, European and domestic companies. This aspect is the backbone of the commercial real estate engine when it comes to the absorption of office and industrial space and investment in the properties here. Avison Young has two offices in Miami, one in the Financial District on Brickell Avenue and one in Coral Gables. We are offering a full range of commercial real estate services from finance, sales, leasing and project management to property management and advisory services.

What is the state of the commercial real estate market in Miami?

Given the strong local economy, the commercial real estate market has remained strong much longer than any of us forecasted, with no weakening in sight. Local businesses are doing well and many are expanding. New-to-market companies from all over the world are here daily looking at office space. This new-to-market business is also precipitating the expansion of the local law, accounting and architectural firms as they absorb additional office space. There is only a 10 percent vacancy rate countywide, so this market needs more office space to continue to meet the needs of this growth.

What differentiates Avison Young in the Miami market?

The number one attribute is our culture of collaboration inside each office and among every office in the world. Not only does the culture make it an amazing place to work, but our clients benefit by our non-silo work ethic and engagement of all the brightest brokers in the business to service them.

An Avison Young principal is engaged in every client's transaction to ensure the delivered service is of the highest possible quality. Finally, the firm recruits the most seasoned brokers in the industry, bringing top talent into every office.

What is your outlook for growth for Avison Young in Miami?

The Avison Young brand is relatively new in Miami. Not only are we the fastest-growing commercial real estate firm in the world, we are the fastest-growing brand in Miami as well. Our projected growth includes an expansion of our presence in the retail sector, agency work, office and industrial leasing, and property management. Our capital markets production is already outpacing all of our expectations and we anticipate that pace to continue.

What makes community engagement so important to Avison Young?

As commercial real estate brokers, we engage in a very lucrative business that earns its income from providing services to the businesses and investors located within our given cities. It seems to me that if we are operating in a financially successful environment that excels due to our work in the community/city we serve, then we have an obligation to give back to the communities in which we operate. This is a value that Avison Young shares, as evidenced by our annual Day of Giving. ●

Seizing Opportunity

An Interview with Jodi V. Meade, CRX, CSM, Principal
and National Director, Automotive Properties Group, Avison Young



Jodi V. Meade

EDITORS' NOTE Jodi Meade founded and launched CBRE's Automotive Properties Group in 2004 and, in 2009, CBRE adopted Meade's service platform nationwide. Prior to 2004, Meade was one of CBRE's leading retail investment specialists in Southern California.

Would you provide an overview of Avison Young's national specialty Automotive Properties Group (APG) practice?

In leading the Automotive Properties Group for Avison Young, I focus on the acquisition, expansion, leasing, relocation, disposition and auto-mall-development needs of owners, tenants, investors, developers, manufacturers and franchisees.

My past and current clients make up an impressive roster with some of the most successful and recognizable names in the auto industry, including: GM, Ford Motor Company, Premier Automotive Group, Sonic Automotive, Sage Automotive Group, West Coast Customs, Penske Automotive and O'Gara Coach Beverly Hills to name just a few.

How do you differentiate APG's services and solutions from its competitors?

I founded and launched one of the country's first Automotive Properties Groups at CBRE. Since that time, this area has evolved into a well-defined niche that has grown exponentially. I've led more than \$1 billion in automotive commercial real estate transactions. Three and a half years ago, I brought the Automotive Properties Group to Avison Young, where the company's entrepreneurial platform has made way for a growing number of new opportunities.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for APG?

As a company, we continue to deliver difference. The automotive group does just that. The challenge in today's real estate environment is to stay ahead of the competition. Avison Young gives us the platform to grow and excel by embracing unique business models and specialized niche practices to set us apart from our competition, which allows us to rise above the noise.

How critical is it to expand the group on a national level through strategic partnerships and acquisitions?

I'm dedicated to the continued growth of our APG into a nationally and internationally recognized niche specialty within the firm. Partnering with the firm's most talented professionals, I am driven to make the automotive group the "go-to" resource for all automotive real estate needs in the industry. Whether in times of expansion or contraction, we provide real estate solutions to perpetuate our clients' goals; maximize asset performance and provide strategic and informed decisions necessary for our clients' future growth and success.

What attracted you to the real estate industry and what makes real estate so special for you?

My mother, Norma J. Meade, was a true pioneer in business and an amazing example to me as I grew up, seeing first-hand that women could be successful in anything they wanted to achieve. My mom began her career as a trailblazer in the '70s as the first woman store director on the West Coast for a major national grocery chain. In the '80s, she then shattered another glass ceiling by founding a commercial real estate company in Beverly Hills that developed regional enclosed shopping centers across the United States. Needless to say, I saw my mother and role model "slaying dragons" every day – and my interest in continuing this legacy of success in retail and commercial real estate prevailed. I worked with my mother and learned the business before I made a transition into other commercial real estate brokerage opportunities in 1991. ●