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Residential Real Estate Focus

Meet D.C. businesswoman-turned-reality-TV-star Stacie Turner

Washington Business Journal - by [Sarah Krouse](#)

So this is what it means to be a housewife in D.C.: Have a master's in business administration from Harvard, sell \$15 million or so in real estate each year and run a charity backed by Fortune 500 companies.

Move over June Cleaver. Meet Stacie Scott Turner, a real estate agent for **Long & Foster Cos. Inc.**, longtime businesswoman, self-proclaimed entrepreneur and one of the five women to join the latest version of cable TV network Bravo's "Real Housewives" wine-andcatfight franchise.

"She's very focused. She isn't a housewife, she's a businessperson," said former business partner John Mahshie. "That's why I thought it was so odd that she did the show."

A risky business ...

The only one of the "Real Housewives of D.C." who actually lives in the District of Columbia, Turner has turned heads this season not only because of an impressive resume that left many wondering why she agreed to do a reality show in the first place but also because she's, well, real.

Turner acknowledges the potential minefield before her. "It was a really difficult decision," she said in a phone interview with the **Washington Business Journal**.

Though she knew the series meant prime exposure for her business, Turner was worried clients might feel disconnected once the show aired. To stay connected to her clients while feeling her way through instant celebrity, Turner has had to take an even more businesslike approach to what is normally the most casual and intimate segment of the real estate industry.

After examining the risks, she decided the benefits outweighed them. "What better platform for my business and my charity?"

... But it's still just business

Five days before the interview, Turner donned a strapless bubble-hemmed purple dress for the show's premiere party at The Madison hotel downtown. Her hand cocked on her hip, she calmly answered a barrage of questions from reporters, despite her handler's best attempts to move her along.

What should we expect from the season? "It's a little sassy," Turner told the hive of reporters, admitting the series would not be without its fair share of drama.

Even with her slightly spicy edge, it's hard to imagine Turner engaging in the table-flipping histrionics that became the norm in earlier seasons of "The Real Housewives."

Turner-the-businesswoman — who has worked at **Procter & Gamble Co.** and the **BET** network and started three companies — said her focus is always on the bottom line: her business, her charity and her family. (Not necessarily in that order.)

When “The Real Housewives” started filming a year ago, Turner was selling high-end homes at luxury boutique company **Sotheby’s** International Realty Affiliates LLC. She’s since moved back to Long & Foster, where she started her residential real estate career in 2002.

That move broadened the scope of properties Turner can sell. She then created her own team to handle the surge in demand she expected the show to create.

“The show just started, but the phone has been ringing,” Turner said. “Sotheby’s was a great experience, but at this point I’m looking to expand.”

In addition to two other agents, her team includes an assistant and a graphic design expert. The staff has had to make adjustments to run the business while Turner is in the limelight.

As any real estate agent will tell you, a successful agent has to be able to separate the serious clients from the merely curious. Working with too many of the latter will kill your business before it ever gets off the ground. Yet a big part of being a residential real estate agent is being accessible.

Most agents are quick to offer a cell phone number. Turner has to be more careful — there’s no shortage of people who would be happy to waste a few hours of her time.

Her new partner, Djana Morris, a longtime friend and former neighbor, said they ... (she and other partner, Kevin Shirley) ... now screen Turner’s phone calls.

“She’s getting a ton of calls. Some are legitimate, but some are people wanting to rent or making up things that they want to do, hoping she’ll take them out,” Morris said. “Her phone fills up very quickly.”

Although Turner still posts a mobile phone number on her website, her team forwards the legitimate business calls to a personal number.

“We decided it was probably a better idea not to have her be so accessible,” Morris said. “As things come up, we’re figuring out how to handle them.”

An extra-ordinary life

Even before the show, Turner, who is licensed in D.C., Maryland and Virginia, was pulling in \$15 million to \$30 million in sales each year.

As she puts it in the show’s opening segment, “I’m very good at what I do.”

Still, the real Turner rolled her eyes as she watched herself play a “real” housewife on screen at the premiere party.

Born into the D.C. foster care system, Turner was adopted when she was four months old and raised in Alexandria. She was the first member of her family to graduate from college, earning a bachelor’s in business administration from Howard University in 1990 before picking up her Harvard MBA in 1996.

Oh, and while she was at Harvard, Turner formed a publishing business with classmates and bought the licensing rights to the school's yearly prospectus.

After working in the corporate world, Turner tried her hand at real estate in 2001, forming **Brickstone Ventures LLC** so she and husband Jason Turner could invest in Washington's burgeoning and then-undervalued real estate market. (Jason Turner, a developer who has worked on several D.C. school and public library contracts, is a licensed real estate agent. He also has a patent pending on a "measuring device" that you will just have to **Google** on your own.)

The couple started with conversions, renovating a duplex on the 1200 block of Lamont Street NW in Columbia Heights, then splitting and renovating another duplex into four condominiums.

Turner, appointed by Mayor Adrian Fenty to the **National Capital Planning Commission** in 2007, even bid on the city's Hill East project, but she said financing was — and continues to be — a challenge.

"My plan is to focus on residential real estate," Turner said. "I'm interested in development, but with the economy sour, raising capital is far too difficult for a small young firm."

She resigned from the planning commission before the "Housewives" premiere.

A balancing act

Turner acknowledges a residential real estate career means working around the schedules of clients who have 9-to-5 jobs. But she said it still allows her to spend time with her two children, Catherine and Jacob, at their 16th Street Heights home in Northwest D.C.

Well ... just barely. "I probably work more hours than ever before, my God," Turner said. "There are more hours and odd hours than when you have a corporate job. Real estate is around the clock."

But when a client calls, regardless of the time of day, she gets down to business and into sales mode.

"She could sell anything — soap, a house," said Mahshie, the former business partner with whom she formed the **Mahshie & Turner Group** while at Sotheby's in 2006.

The partnership lasted about a year.

Turner's take on the real estate market was simply different from his, Mahshie said.

"She's a very good businessperson. Her background is in marketing, I was more interested in things having to do with real estate — architecture, preservation," he said.

Turner's own words indicate she's all business. "Houses that are priced right move — I'm not in the business of having houses sit on the market," she said. "I'm very analytical when it comes to pricing."

Mahshie was quick to add that there were no negative feelings between the former business partners. "I said if press called, I'd be a gentleman," he said with a laugh.

When she's not selling houses — or driving her children to gymnastics and soccer practice — Turner works on Extra-Ordinary Life, the charity she founded to support girls in the foster care system.

Although she now has a larger team and competing demands for her time, Turner wants clients to know she's still front and center in the business and ready to apply her market savvy to selling their homes.

"Every day I try to divide the day between real estate and charity. Charity is my passion, and I enjoy doing it, but it's hard to fit in all the real estate stuff and my family stuff," she said.

"My clients dictate my schedule. If they need to go looking, I drop everything. It's important that I provide them good service and important that I reassure them that with the show and the charity that I'm available and truly focused."

As Turner juggles the additional demands that come with her sudden exposure, she summed up her real life as a non-housewife of D.C.: "There is no average day."