

**CRAIN'S** CHICAGO BUSINESS 2021

# NOTABLE

## WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

These 65 professionals demonstrate that construction and design is far less of an exclusively male domain than it used to be. The women featured here lead in all corners of the field, including design, site selection, project management and administration, with specialties in landscaping, office buildings, senior and student housing, health care and data centers. Firms represented range from specialized architecture practices and subcontractors to the largest general contractors. Some are on the cutting edge of green design, winning Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, or LEED, certifications for sustainable buildings in their use of energy, water and materials.

Early in the pandemic, many pivoted to develop safety protocols so that work could continue on-site and projects could be completed. These Notables champion women in their fields, mentoring colleagues so they can advance to leadership positions. Many participate in structured programs aimed to engage the next generation of women in the possibilities of designing distribution centers, renovating historic buildings and building senior housing.

*By Judith Crown and Lisa Bertagnoli, Crain's Chicago Business*



**Rosemary Swierk**

*President, Direct Steel & Construction*

Rosemary Swierk is the founder of Direct Steel & Construction, a 17-year-old Crystal Lake-based company that offers commercial general contracting, construction management and owners' representation services. While the pandemic delayed some opportunities, Direct was able to proceed with several projects, including completion of the first phase of an \$11 million contract to expand a Veterans Affairs building, with the second phase underway; the construction of an electronic recycling facility; various environmental building upgrades for a local manufacturer; and a sizable project award at USACE at Fort Hood, Texas. Swierk serves as an ambassador at the Women's Business Development Center and also is a state-appointed board member at the Small Business Development Center. She also has been a featured speaker on real estate and construction.