**Ramola Ramesh Motwani**

Ramola Ramesh Motwani is the Chairwoman of Merrimac Ventures, the Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based real estate management, investment, and development company that she runs alongside her sons, Nitin and Dev. Merrimac concentrates on hospitality and mixed-use development with an emphasis on prime land, as well as multifamily residential, condominiums, retail, and office sectors. Motwani oversees the company’s business strategy and advises new projects through the development process.

While Merrimac Ventures began its journey in South Florida, through Motwani’s tenacious leadership, the Firm has substantially expanded its holdings into a national footprint. Today, Merrimac is leading or co-developing 18 hospitality, residential and retail projects valued above $3 billion. Current and recent developments include the Miami Worldcenter, the Four Seasons Hotel and Private Residences Fort Lauderdale, The Gale Boutique Hotel and Residences, Paramount Fort Lauderdale Beach, and Conrad Hilton Fort Lauderdale, among others. The Firm’s current pipeline of future development totals more than $3.7 billion in value.

The Merrimac Ventures’ story is one of triumph over adversity, and is a testament to how the vision and hard work of the Motwani family helped transform a city.

In the 1980's, Ramola Motwani first visited Fort Lauderdale with her husband, Ramesh "Bob" Motwani, and their two young sons Nitin and Dev, on vacation from their home in St. Charles, Missouri, where the family, originally from India, ran a wholesale and retail import business and managed multiple apartment rentals. The Motwanis were lured by Fort Lauderdale's tropical climate and saw the business potential to invest in the area, piggybacking on the steady revenue from the rowdy yet reliable Spring Break crowd that promised such high returns.

Together, Ramola and Bob shored up finances to acquire the Gold Coast, Tropic Cay, and Merrimac motels, expanding their rental business into Fort Lauderdale Beach. The couple owned and operated them all until Bob suddenly passed away in 1994 at the height of their momentum, not long after the city had cracked down on the seasonal debauchery of the Spring Break crowds, forcing many moteliers to slip into bankruptcy. Through perseverance, Ramola Motwani was able to hold onto the portfolio and expand it significantly by acquiring additional properties and she single handedly secured the unanimous city approval for the first luxury hotel on Ft Lauderdale Beach, Nitin joined Ramola in 2004, followed by Dev in 2006. Today Ramola has operated several hotels in Broward County, predominantly on Fort Lauderdale Beach, and has become one of the most pioneering and active local community leaders, profoundly passionate about South Florida’s real estate  and hospitality industries.

Motwani's philanthropic focus centers around education. She serves as a State Board Member of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association’s Education Committee as well as the Broward Chapter, where she implemented and now spearheads the first Hospitality Management Program for High Schools in Broward County. Most recently with the 2019 launch of The Academy for Hospitality and Tourism Management. In partnership with Broward College and inspired in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Bob Motwani's passing, The Academy supports education initiatives through an initial endowment and the creation of scholarships, internships, and mentorships for deserving students. The Motwani Academy at Broward College, as it's officially named, brings an array of experiential learning opportunities that result in graduates who are ready to hit the ground running in pursuit of a career in hospitality. The program is focused on developing the knowledge and skills that underpin an array of professions ranging from hotel management and food service to hospitality law and financial management.

"Hospitality is an industry I want to redefine," says Motwani. "I share my husband's dream and continue to be committed to growing, shaping and enhancing our industry, and we're thrilled to partner with Broward College who will develop future leaders who will contribute to this burgeoning industry, which is one path to accomplishing this goal."

Engaged in the Fort Lauderdale community, Mrs. Motwani has been a major force in beach development and redevelopment, transforming the beach from small hotels and motels to an upscale luxury market. She planned the Centennial Beach Fest celebration with the City Commission. She was also the founding chairwoman for the Holiday Lights on the Beach and a founding chairwoman of the annual Jeb Bush Classic Beach Bash fundraiser benefiting the Cystic Fibrosis foundation. Furthermore, she was instrumental in successfully organizing the efforts to bring back the Ft Lauderdale Air Show in 2012.

Ramola Motwani is an active member of the Broward Workshop, and a member of the United Way of Broward County, serving as their chairwoman for the annual Mayor’s Gala in 2015. She is a member of the Tourist Development Council (an advisory board to the Broward county commission). She serves as a member of the Cleveland Clinic Weston Board of Trustees.. Mrs. Motwani has served as commissioner on the Florida Commission on the Status of Women and has served on the Beach Redevelopment Board, an advisory board to the city of Fort Lauderdale. Additionally, she is a past Chairwoman of the Beach Council, a Chamber of Commerce Member, and Trustee for many years.

Mrs. Motwani’s civic-minded affiliations include being the Past President of the Alliance of Global Sindhi Associations and is a current Board of Directors member. She is also Treasurer of the Global Sindhi Foundation. She is a Life member of Association of Indians in America and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association. She has represented Sindhi Adhikar Manch at the United Nations and served on the Board of the Boys and Girls Club of Broward County. She has been involved in many other charities, such as, being a volunteer with the Citizens Volunteer Corps, a Trustee of the South Florida Hindu Temple, past Vice President of the India – US Chamber of Commerce Inc., South Florida, and past President of the Sindhi Association of South Florida, as well as a Founding Member of the International Chamber of GOPIO.

Ramola was inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame, the Nova Southeast University Entrepreneur Hall of Fame, and the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame. Other awards she has received are the March of Dimes Woman of Distinction Award, the Salute to Business Award, the Woman’s Council Award and the AGSA Sindhi Association Award, the Sun Sentinel Excalibur Small Business Leader for Broward County, Cleveland Clinic Sapphire Award, Women of Excellence, City of Fort Lauderdale Beach Visionaries Award, Sant Nirankari Mission Outstanding Contribution Towards Betterment of the Community, Desh-Videsh Media Group Community Leader Award, South Florida Business Journal Ultimate CEO Award, Individual Fundraiser of the Year for Scleroderma Foundation, Largest Team Fundraiser for Scleroderma, Alliance of Sindhi Associations of America, Inc. Leadership Award, and the Chamber Women’s Circle of Excellence Award for Hospitality. She is a 2023 History Fort Lauderdale Woman Trailblazer, Champion of Change and was named a 2023 Florida 500 Legend by Florida Trend Magazine.   Finally, she has been honored by the United States House of Representatives for excellence in developing the City of Fort Lauderdale, received the Founder’s Award from the City of Fort Lauderdale, and received a tribute from the Florida House of Representatives for her extensive community involvement and business success.