

Massachusetts

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What was the genesis of the path that has made you a trailblazer?

As a college student, I had a summer job inspecting condominium units with buyers before they moved in. I learned two life-changing lessons: the world runs best on trust, and it helps to be part of a great team. Over the past 25 years, I've worked with the best people, in the best places, to gain the skills and experience needed to advise a wide variety of clients on complex, sophisticated real estate transactions.

What sort of change has resulted from the concept?

We build client teams around trust and rich and diverse experience and skills to help clients navigate multibillion-dollar deals with many moving parts. We know where the opportunities and hazards are, and we shepherd clients through what are often first-of-their-kind projects. Recently, we negotiated a \$700 million public-private partnership to build the first air-rights development over the Massachusetts Turnpike in Boston in 40 years. The project brought together a state authority, a European hotel brand, foreign capital, an anchor tenant, a construction lender, and plenty of architects and engineers. It took seven years to negotiate this extremely complicated project, but we were able to complete five independent deals and closings simultaneously – for the air rights, construction loan, anchor tenant lease, hotel development, and building of the deck – in the middle of the pandemic.

We helped another client to secure over \$1.5 billion in construction financing, so far, to develop one of the Boston area's single largest development projects with 5.2 million square feet of commercial and multifamily space, infrastructure, and public amenities across 18 parcels and 43 acres. We have been working on this project since 2015 when we helped our client purchase this massive site. Creative strategies drive everything we do. Over several years, we have helped a Canadian client invest over \$22 billion in U.S. real estate. Throughout our 18 year relationship, we have helped them navigate challenging corporate, tax, and other cross-border structuring issues. Currently, we are helping them become a leader in the build-to-rent (BTR), single-family housing (SFR) market, using innovative structures and financing transactions for this fast-emerging asset class.

What bearing will this have on the future?

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated trends rooted in technology, demographics, and lifestyles. Whether a client is working on an air-rights deal, a mixed-use development, or a single-family rental portfolio, there is tremendous opportunity to develop innovative projects that will help build our future.

How did you end up as a real estate lawyer?

I grew up in Montreal, Canada and used to visit construction sites on the weekends with my dad who is a real estate developer. I came to the U.S. to attend law school at New York University School of Law after earning an M.Sc. in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I knew I wanted to be a real estate lawyer before I started law school. Real estate attracts creative people, with great vision, who are open to taking significant risks. This works best when coupled with a trusted advisor who can help execute on these visions in a creative, collaborative, and prudent manner. In law school, I interviewed for a job with a Big Law real estate partner who bragged to me during the interview, "I crush people every day; when I finish, there is a winner and a loser." This conversation made such a strong impression on me. From that day forward, I vowed I would never be that type of real estate lawyer.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

As the co-chair of Goulston & Storrs' Real Estate Group and our International Investors Group, I juggle my own practice, representing real estate developers and US and foreign institutional and private equity investors, while working to support our group of over 100 attorneys, in several markets, who together represent major clients in diverse and complex real estate matters. We are living in such a dynamic and exciting time. I love creating teams where everyone's talents can be utilized to achieve the best results for our clients and our firm. I have been a real estate lawyer for nearly 25 years – 20 of those years at this firm – and not one day goes by that I don't appreciate the impressive team we have, the levels of trust, and the collaborative and creative way we solve problems for our clients.

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Zev Gewurz

Congratulations
to Zev for
being named to
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