

Hospitality Group Of The Year: Greenberg Traurig

By Ali Sullivan

Law360 (January 24, 2023, 2:02 PM EST) -- Greenberg Traurig LLP steered developers through a deal for the creation of a \$2 billion mixed-use project in Beverly Hills, California, and guided clients in multimillion-dollar hotel acquisitions through late 2021 and 2022 — achievements which, for a third consecutive year, landed the firm's hospitality practice on Law360's Practice Groups of the Year.

With approximately 50 attorneys specializing in wide-ranging elements of the hospitality industry across 19 offices worldwide — 14 of which are in the United States — the practice group's lawyers "come at it from many, many directions and can pretty much handle almost anything in the field," said hospitality practice co-chair Richard Davis, who is based on Los Angeles. Davis leads the practice group alongside Nelson Migdal in Washington, D.C., and Michael Sullivan in Orlando.

In developing the \$2 billion, 1.4 million-square-foot, mixed-use project in Beverly Hills, for example, Greenberg Traurig serves as development, subdivision, condominium and regulatory counsel for the effort "many years in the making," Davis said.

Located at the intersection of Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards — described as "the gateway to Beverly Hills" — the One Beverly Hills project is slated to include 303 luxury condos and a 42-room hotel alongside an expansive botanical garden, retail, dining and a private club following its December 2021 approval from the city.

"It was the subject of a long, negotiated development agreement — a historic one for Beverly Hills in terms of what Beverly Hills gets out of it and in terms of what the developer gets," Davis said.

Migdal credits the practice group's success to its practitioners' immersion in the hospitality industry and their strongly maintained connections within it.

"We know the hottest sort of cases that are happening," Migdal said. "We're looking over the horizon for what issues are going to happen next, and we have very, very, very deep relationships within the business."



Those deep relationships in November 2021 helped facilitate longtime client BLDG Management Co. Inc.'s first westward expansion following the 2010 sale of its holdings in Marina del Rey, California. The New York-based real estate investment company, in partnership with Metrovest Equities and BB Living, marked the milestone with the acquisition of the Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa in Paradise Valley, Arizona — a landmark popular with celebrities that has since been rebranded to Gurney's Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa.

Also in the past year, Greenberg Traurig again assisted BLDG and Metrovest as the companies refinanced a Gurney's-branded resort in Montauk, New York, for \$217.5 million.

"Clients of this magnitude don't go back to law firms where they don't believe that that law firm is really looking out for them and will walk through fire for them," Migdal said. "And I think that is really important, and a credit to the GT team as a whole."

The global scope of the hospitality practice is another boon to clients, such as Tristan Capital Partners. The U.K.-based real estate investment company called on Greenberg Traurig for representation in the purchase of its first asset — a 261-room hotel in Manchester that will be part of the brand Yotel, a lifestyle brand expanding across Europe, North America and Asia.

The firm's London office spearheaded the acquisition while the Washington, D.C., office took on the hotel development and franchise work. Those cross-border endeavors are "routine" for Greenberg Traurig, Migdal said, and clients "know that they have a hospitality practice that can assist them literally anywhere on the planet."

The hotel acquisitions didn't stop there, as Greenberg Traurig represented real estate development firm Left Lane in its purchase of the iconic Mansion on Forsyth Park, located in Savannah, Georgia. The \$52.5 million deal in June cleared the way for the real estate developer's multimillion-dollar renovation plans for the property, which was built in 1888.

The combination of the initial purchase and renovation plans represent "both the initial investment and then ongoing investment in that particular area," said Samantha Ahuja, a real estate shareholder who focuses her practice on hospitality matters.

The hotel is significant in and of itself, too, Ahuja noted, adding that historically notable properties like the mansion will "continue to thrive — just under different ownership and with a new, more modern look and feel."

Greenberg Traurig in October 2021 represented longtime client Swire Properties in handling the sale of East Miami Hotel at Brickell City Centre — a \$174 million deal that was one of South Florida's largest hotel transactions since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the firm said.

The "breadth and scope" of the project made the transaction significant for Greenberg Traurig, Ahuja said, calling on various swaths of the practice to close the deal while also "smack dab in the middle of the pandemic."

Looking forward in 2023, Sullivan and Davis expect big, long-term development projects coming down the pipeline — such as developments in Jacksonville, Florida, and Malibu, California — that won't be

"vulnerable to the machinations of the interest rate and hotel debt markets over the next 12 to 24 months," Sullivan said.

"A number of the projects that I start the year with in 2023 are of that type — they're long-range, large capital investment projects," Sullivan said.

--Editing by Dave Trumbore.

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