2026 MVP

LAW360

Kim McGrath



Kimberly McGrath of Kirkland & Ellis LLP is advising a consortium of investors acquiring Aligned Data Centers LLC in a $40 billion deal and is guiding CyrusOne LP on several multibillion-dollar data center transactions, earning her a spot as one of the 2026 Law360 Real Estate MVPs.

Her biggest accomplishment:

McGrath is proud of the work she's done to help build Kirkland's digital infrastructure practice, which includes a mix of attorneys who specialize in data centers with energy regulatory, permitting, tax and other legal needs, she said.

"We have built this team of experts, who, all they're doing is digital infrastructure transactions, and we have hundreds of attorneys at Kirkland who are doing this," McGrath said. "Even though data centers have been around for a long time, at the scale that we're doing them now, these transactions are fairly nascent. There's not a lot of people in the world who have this expertise to do these transactions."

The data center deals McGrath and her colleagues have worked on include steering Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure Partnership, Abu Dhabi state investment firm MGX, and BlackRock Inc.'s Global Infrastructure Partners on a $40 billion purchase of Aligned Data Centers from funds managed by Macquarie Asset Management.

The team also recently provided counsel to CyrusOne on a $4.4 billion joint venture with Energy Capital Partners Management LP to build a hyperscale data center campus in Texas, and to Related Digital on a lease supporting the development of a $16 billion data center in Michigan.

McGrath said some of the transactions she worked on, including the Related Digital deal, had unique structures for the data center space.

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had experience in those relevant fields, but maybe didn't know data centers, and added them with the team who has spent [time] really learning data centers day in and day out," she said.

Her biggest challenge:

The astronomical demand for data centers has pushed McGrath and her colleagues to move quickly, with creativity and flexibility, to complete deals, many of which had never been done before, she noted.

"There's no playbook, so you have to be unbelievably creative, thinking out of the box," McGrath said. "How do you solve the problems that your clients are facing when there's not a set path, right?"

Some deals have required her team to pivot multiple times to adapt to the changing capital markets, she said.

"We might think we're doing a commercial mortgage backed securities financing, then we're switching to a bank financing, then we switch to a bond financing," McGrath said.

Working on such challenging deals creates an exciting dynamic with her clients, she added.

"Some of these private equity shops or data center developers are creating brand-new companies, and so you're working with them to structure their company from day one. And then you're working with them on their first transaction, which in some instances their first transaction is a $15 billion deal," McGrath said.

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Why she's a real estate attorney:

What has stuck out to McGrath since her internship days working for a publicly traded company are the personalities of people in the real estate business, she said.

"They were very entrepreneurial. They were very creative. They had just a total different risk tolerance. Like, they were really willing to dive in and take risk and be okay with failure," McGrath said. "I thought they just had such a unique personality and mindset that I was really drawn to."

McGrath said she's drawn to data centers because of how creative the work can be.

"It really pulls my historic background on the real estate side of capital discipline and understanding risk, and takes that into a completely new ecosystem," she said.

Her advice for junior attorneys:

Early-career attorneys should try not to be afraid to dive into the work, even if they aren't experts in their fields, she said.

"Really focus on your soft skills that you do have," McGrath said. "Like, be very organized; be on time; be proactive; take ownership of your work; and if you're doing all of those things, you will eventually learn the substance."

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