



2017 Practice Group of the Year

Real Estate

Successfully navigating private deals for Starwood Capital Group, portfolio acquisitions for Gramercy Property Trust, and financing for a major New York property development is no easy task, but Kirkland & Ellis LLP's real estate team was up to the job, scoring these deals and many more for clients and earning a spot among *Law360's* 2017 Practice Groups of the Year.

Kirkland's real estate group — consisting of approximately 65 attorneys in its New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and London offices — represents some of the largest players in the industry, including property managers, private equity and investment funds, and sovereign wealth funds. The firm's clients rely on the firm's impressive track record and experience in the real estate industry, trusting Kirkland's real estate team with their most complex transactions and financing matters.

"While there are other firms that do play in that space, they aren't necessarily going to be as large or as deep as Kirkland is," partner Scott Berger said.

One of the areas in which Kirkland excels is take-private deals, evidenced by its representation of Starwood Capital Group in its \$2.85 billion deal for Milestone

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Apartments Real Estate Investment Trust. The deal presented a challenge for Kirkland because even though Starwood sought to take Milestone private simply to access the assets that came with the REIT, the deal was still an acquisition and thus had to be treated differently than a simple real estate purchase.

This meant navigating inside the M&A world, while also looking through the lens of real estate, making sure to understand the differences in closing conditions and due diligence, among other things.

"That's always a unique challenge for lawyers in dealing with the client who's viewing it as real estate deal and trying to manage or deal with

risks and allocations of risks that are different because it's structured as a take private as opposed to an acquisition," Kirkland partner Jonathan Schechter said.

Kirkland's real estate group also helps work through public-to-public transactions, such as property developer Equity One Inc.'s \$15.6 billion stock-for-stock merger with shopping center owner and operator Regency Centers Corp.

The firm is adept at working through the complexities of transactions that involve standalone portfolios as well. For example, Kirkland guided Gramercy Property Trust in an acquisition, financing and joint venture involving a portfolio of 43 single and multi-tenant

industrial buildings and 6 warehouse and distribution centers. The assets included in the deal were valued at more than \$950 million.

In addition, Kirkland advised Gramercy on its purchase of a portfolio of warehouses in several states, including California and Texas, for \$521 million. The deal, which included 17 industrial properties, required Gramercy to assume \$198 million in debt through four existing credit facilities.

But acquisitions are not the only type of work in which Kirkland's real estate team specializes. The group works with lenders and borrowers to secure financing for various projects, including a \$1.24 billion construction financing for an affiliate of The General Investment & Development Co. The financing was for the Riverside Center, a \$2 billion project on New York's Upper West Side consisting of more than 1,100 residential apartment units, 27,000 square feet of retail space and a 65,000-square-foot amenity center.

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The practice group's ability to work on such a wide variety of deals is not only a testament to its own attorneys, but other teams in the firm as well, including M&A, private equity, investment funds and tax. The other groups work hand-in-hand with the real estate team, adding to an already stellar lineup of attorneys.

“We’re blessed with a lot of capabilities and market experience for each of the legal areas of expertise that are necessary for the myriad types of transactions in which we are involved,” Berger said. “One of our strengths is our ability to handle any deal in the real estate space, in most shapes or forms that it may come.”

Although 2017 was incredibly successful for Kirkland's real estate team, the firm is looking to build upon their achievements once more. This means getting stronger

and adding depth and value to the group's existing strengths, recruiting better talent and continuing to grow as it has done in previous years.

“We’re always looking internally to see where we can improve, where we can be more efficient and more cost effective for the client,” Schechter said. “Clients always come first, and we’re always trying to figure out how to better serve them.”



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