



Jonathan W. Knipe

Co-Chair, Real Estate

Philadelphia, New York

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Jon has more than 25 years of experience leading complex real estate projects as an Am Law 100 attorney and general counsel to sophisticated real estate companies. His current practice focuses on large-scale mixed-use development projects, sophisticated joint ventures (public and private), complex financing and restructuring, corporate leasing, and real estate and development disputes.

As counsel to some of the best-known real estate developers, lenders, and owner-managers in the United States, Jon is often engaged on high-stakes matters at the intersection of law, finance, business, and policy. He operates as a navigator, translator, and guide — advising on overarching strategy, supervising deal development, framing core issues, and ushering high-stakes projects through to close.

Jon brings an unusual depth of experience to private practice, having served as chief legal officer to Silverstein Properties for 15 years and, prior to that, as general counsel at Fisher Brothers, a multibillion dollar real estate development company, and counsel at Related Companies, the largest privately owned real estate development company in New York. While in-house, Jon played a pivotal role in the planning, financing, development, and operation of some of the biggest development projects and public-private partnerships of the 21st century, including redevelopment of the World Trade Center site after 9/11 and completion of the Time Warner Center on Columbus Circle.

In addition to client work, Jon serves as co-chair of the firm's Real Estate Practice. He helps lead a national team of more than 80 attorneys and is closely involved in efforts to both recruit and retain top real estate counsel.

Jon is an adjunct faculty member at New York Law School, where he teaches a seminar on public and private real estate joint ventures, and is member and the former chairperson of the Real Estate Advisory Board of Penn State's Smeal College of Business. He serves on the board of trustees of the Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF), a nonprofit that provides academic and cultural enrichment to students in underserved communities, and sits on the Selection Committee of the HEAF-based Alexandra Korry Scholarship Fund, awarded to first-generation college and law school students who want to pursue careers in law or public service.

Jon was instrumental in the revitalization of the historic Forest Hills Stadium in Queens, which had fallen into neglect and disrepair after 1978 when the U.S. Open Tennis Tournament was moved from Forest Hills to Flushing Meadows. As chair of the Ad Hoc Redevelopment Committee from 2013-2022, he dedicated enormous time and effort to negotiating an agreement among the key stakeholders to restore this unique urban resource, now a thriving concert venue.

Jon earned his bachelor's degree from the Pennsylvania State University and his law degree from Delaware Law School.

Experience

Represented a consortium of lenders in connection with the refinancing of 640 Fifth Avenue, a 300,000-

Practice Areas

- Real Estate
- Real Estate Development
- Real Estate Finance
- Entertainment Law

Industry Sectors

- Hospitality
- Real Estate & Construction

Education

- Widener University Delaware Law School, J.D., 1996
- Pennsylvania State University, B.A., 1993

Bar Admissions

- New York
- Pennsylvania

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square-foot mixed-use development facing Manhattan's storied Fifth Avenue retail corridor, owned by an affiliate of Vornado Realty Trust and Crown Acquisitions Inc. The financing included a senior Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities (CMBS) mortgage loan in the amount of \$300 million originated by Morgan Stanley Bank, N.A., The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., and the Bank of Montreal as well as a \$100 million mezzanine loan originated by Morgan Stanley Bank, N.A. and The Goldman Sachs Group. The project also included a complex ground lease arrangement that was designed in 1970 and that established an ownership structure utilizing practices since discontinued under the zoning code.

Represented Safehold, Inc., a publicly traded corporation that originates real property acquisition and ground lease transactions, in connection with a complicated and highly structured parcel assemblage, acquisition of parcels (from multiple third parties), and creation of a ground leasehold estate for The Hunter Apartments, a new, ground-up multifamily development in Colorado Springs, Colo. The \$90 million transaction required innovative structures to balance the ground lessee's and leasehold lender's different interests.

Represented Safehold, Inc. in connection with construction financing for a modular student housing project located at 1598 University Avenue in Berkeley, Cal. As lead transactional counsel for Safehold, the Landlord/Lender, Cozen O'Connor drafted and negotiated the purchase and sale agreement, ground lease, the development agreement, and related ancillary documents; construction loan documents; general contractor contract; and negotiating recognition agreements with the Preferred Equity Investor. Further, given that the project involves modular construction, a large portion of the development costs are budgeted for modular student housing units that will be fabricated off-site. Accordingly, Cozen O'Connor negotiated the modular unit subcontract and drafted and negotiated bespoke security agreements. This matter required complicated maneuvering to ensure that each capital source fit within the overall transaction structure.

Represented Silverstein Capital Partners in a \$340 million construction loan financing for a mixed-use hotel condominium project in downtown Miami. The 50-story project is slated to include a 219-room hotel with 310 residential condominium units above the hotel portion, as well as ground-floor retail space that will include five restaurant and bar areas.

Represented the Cantor Silverstein Opportunity Zone Trust in the development and financing of 3.0 University Place, a 250,000 sq. ft. life sciences, commercial lab, retail, and office building in West Philadelphia. This development supports Philadelphia's burgeoning life sciences sector and includes long-term space for established research institutions as well as a floor dedicated to pre-built "Growth Pods" with short-term and flexible leases for smaller-scale life science companies.

Represented Morgan Stanley in a \$450 million CMBS loan secured by a Class A office building in Washington, D.C. that was fully leased by the U.S. General Services Administration.

Represented Safehold, Inc. in a sale leaseback of VF Corp.'s headquarters in Denver, home to VF's leadership team and six major outdoor brands, including The North Face, JanSport, Smartwool, Icebreaker, Altra, and Eagle Creek. To complete this project, the team negotiated a 99-year leaseback agreement, acquisition financing, and bridge financing. The final sale set a new record in price per square foot for office space in downtown Denver.

Represented Silverstein Properties in connection with hotel, office, and development-site acquisitions and financings, including the Four Seasons Hotel and Private residences site in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood, the Four Seasons Hotel site in Walt Disney World, the U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles, the BNY Mellon Center in Philadelphia, and the Disney/ABC studio facilities on the west side of Manhattan.

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Represented Silverstein Properties in the redevelopment of Towers 3, 4, and 7 at the World Trade Center site after 9/11. Served in a leadership role in the financing (\$3.6 billion in tax exempt bonds were issued to finance the construction of the three towers), construction (6.5 million square feet of office and retail space), and leasing (anchor tenants included Moody's Corporation, the City of New York, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and Group M).

Represented the Related Companies in the development and financing of Time Warner Center, a mixed-use development featuring two 750-ft towers and a group of smaller buildings for a total of 2.1 million square feet. In addition to Time Warner's world headquarters and CNN broadcast studios, the complex includes a 249-room Mandarin Oriental Hotel, 191 luxury condominium units, a Galleria of upscale retailers, and a concert hall for jazz at Lincoln Center. The total development cost was \$1.7 billion, including a \$1.3 billion construction loan.

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