



New York Real Estate Journal

 nyrej

**ONES TO WATCH**  
**RISING**  
**STARS**



**Joseph Donato, PE**  
Senior Project Manager  
DeSimone Consulting Engineering

*"Hard-working and detail-oriented, Joseph P. Donato, PE, has consistently shown his aptitude as a structural engineer over his 10 years at DeSimone. In addition to impressive technical know-how, Joe brings*

*apragmatic, management-oriented approach to running projects. He readily identifies project challenges and steps up to help solve them — endearing Joe to clients who value his teamwork, leadership, and ability to translate complex structural challenges into logical, efficient solutions."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Growing up in New York, I always had a love for the Twin Towers — something so simple but of such an impressively large scale — you could see them from almost anywhere. As a kid, I spent hours building with Tinkertoys, constantly drawn to the challenge of how things come together. My uncle is an architect, and I thought I'd follow that path. But I realized what truly excited me wasn't just the design — it was the problem-solving and technical complexity behind it. That realization drew me to engineering, where I've combined my passion for the built environment with the analytical rigor I crave.



**Robert Wais**  
Associate  
Meridian Capital Group

*"We are honored to recognize Robert Wais as one of NYREJ's Ones to Watch. This recognition reflects his commitment to building meaningful relationships, uncovering opportunities, and creating value for*

*clients throughout the New York City real estate market and beyond. As he continues to grow his career, he remains focused on hard work and persistence, leveraging the firm's three divisions to deliver exceptional results while helping shape the future of the industry."*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

Building meaningful relationships has always come naturally to me, especially through my work in the food space. I used to host some of the most active commercial real estate professionals in the industry, and transitioning those relationships into potential transactions has been both challenging and rewarding. For example, identifying an ownership group that was not actively considering a transaction, developing a relationship with them, and ultimately positioning the property for a potential sale or joint venture. While transactions are important, I am most proud of the process it takes to achieve them.



**Ryan Windus**  
Associate  
Meridian Capital Group

*"I've worked closely with Ryan and have consistently been impressed by his professionalism, work ethic, and attention to detail.*

*His experience across multiple sectors of commercial real estate shows in both his work and his client relationships. Even under tight deadlines, he remains dependable, collaborative, and always willing to help. He's a true value-add to any team, and I'm excited to see his continued growth as a rising star in the industry."*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

Across more than \$1 billion in closed debt and equity transactions, I am proudest not of any single deal, but of earning the trust to work alongside exceptional teams and counterparties to bring complex business plans to life. What drives me most is seeing the physical result: residences, healthcare facilities, entertainment venues, and the places where people live, work, and learn, and knowing our work helped make those spaces better. Real estate is fundamentally a people business, and the deals matter most because of the lives improved by the spaces they create.



**David Sirchenko**  
Associate  
Meridian Capital Group

*"David is a fine example of the high-quality talent emerging in New York City commercial real estate. His ability to understand com-*

*plex transactions, analyze deal structures, and implement the appropriate processes positions him for continued success. David's enthusiasm for the business, combined with his growing expertise and strong work ethic, has made him a standout among his peers and one of the industry's rising professionals."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I was drawn to commercial real estate because it combines finance, entrepreneurship, and relationship building. I began my career in commercial mortgage brokerage while still completing my bachelor's degree, which gave me early exposure to transactions and client relationships. As I developed professionally, I realized the importance of being immersed in the market and surrounding myself with industry leaders. That desire to be closer to the action and build stronger relationships ultimately led me to join Meridian Capital Group.

# MERIDIAN CONGRATULATES OUR 2026 RISING STARS IN COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

We are proud to celebrate the next generation of leaders shaping the future of our industry.



# Leading the Way

King & Spalding congratulates all NYREJ 2026 Rising Stars. We are proud to celebrate our partner **Doug Elsbeck** for his leadership, innovation and vision in shaping New York's commercial real estate industry.



**Doug Elsbeck**  
Partner  
*Rising Star*



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## Congratulations, Avery Boxell!

KSM (Katz, Sapper & Miller) congratulates Avery Boxell on his recognition as one of NYREJ's 2026 Ones to Watch: Rising Stars.

As part of KSM's Real Estate Services Group in New York, Avery helps carry forward the firm's commitment to providing real estate investors, developers, and owners with thoughtful tax planning, technical expertise, and industry-focused guidance.

**From all of us at KSM, congratulations on this well-deserved honor!**



**AVERY BOXELL**  
Tax Director, Real Estate Services Group  
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**ksm**  
CPAs & Advisors



**David Benningfield**  
Assistant Construction Manager  
Wendel

*“David Benningfield’s journey from intern to full-time team member reflects a strong work ethic and a steady commitment to growth. He approaches projects with focus and follow-through, earning the trust of colleagues and project partners along the way. David’s collaborative mindset and*

*willingness to step in where needed continue to set him apart.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Ever since I was a kid, I’ve been a creator. From LEGOs to contracting to construction management, there has been nothing I enjoy more than making a vision come to life! Although, that’s not all we build in this vast field of construction. I think that the greatest thing men and women in this industry can build, is the personal yet professional connections with our colleagues and fellow creators.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

I see a giant opportunity to involve the use of greater technology in the field of construction to increase the level of efficiency on a jobsite and, more importantly, the safety. Drones for surveying and pictures, BIM for coordination and collaboration, and Augmented and Virtual Reality for a frame of reference in design. All of these are incredible tools of the future; however, nothing can replace the person who knows how to use them efficiently.



**Kyle Stillwell, RLA, ASLA**  
Landscape Architect  
Wendel

*“Kyle approaches his work with steady focus and a genuine interest in how sites come together, from early concepts through construction. His experience across grading, stormwater, planting design, and detailing reflects a well-rounded understanding of landscape architecture and the role it plays*

*in shaping communities. Since earning his New York license, he has continued to refine his perspective and contribute in meaningful ways, and we are excited to see how his career continues to evolve.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My undergraduate degree was in engineering, and my initial plan was to work in the aerospace industry. However, after spending a few years working in that world, I realized that I wasn’t satisfied by what I was doing. I have always had a passion for the natural world. And growing up in Buffalo, surrounded by both good urban design by names like Frederick Law Olmsted, and the urban decay that is typical of many post-industrial American cities, I have always been interested in what can make public spaces better for people and the environment. It wasn’t until I decided to change careers that I discovered landscape architecture and realized there was a path for me to combine my interests with my engineering training in a profession that has a direct impact on people’s daily lives.



**Holly Fiore, RA, NCIDQ**  
Architect  
Wendel

*“Holly Fiore is a licensed architect in New York State with more than six years at Wendel and a thoughtful, well-rounded approach to design. Her work spans both interior and*

*exterior environments, giving her a unique ability to think across disciplines and understand how each layer of a project shapes the overall experience. Holly approaches each effort with care for both client goals and the people who use the space every day. As her career continues to grow, she stands out as a rising talent whose perspective and creativity continue to elevate the work around her.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My career is something that I very luckily fell into. I had a great guidance counselor my senior year of high school who pushed me into attending college. I was looking for something that would allow me to be both creative while also scratching the itch I have for problem solving. The path to my role now was paved with my everlasting desire to improve and learn. I don’t settle for standing still, and I am always pushing myself to evolve, learn, and reach the next level professionally.



**Bill Anterline, PE**  
Civil/Renewable Energy Engineer  
Wendel

*“Bill takes a thoughtful, steady approach to civil engineering, shaped by years of experience and a genuine commitment to collaboration. He plays a key role in guiding projects from early planning through construction, working closely with clients, teams,*

*and agencies to keep things moving forward with clarity and purpose. His work reflects a strong understanding of how thoughtful site design, stormwater management, and infrastructure planning can support long-term sustainability and community needs. Bill’s leadership style builds trust and keeps teams aligned, making him a valued presence on every project he touches.”*

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

I’ve had several mentors throughout my 15+ years in the industry and they have all taught me unforgettable lessons in both work and personal life. My current mentor is my Renewable Energy Program Manager, Sheila Ransbottom. Since the day I started working with her, she has helped me cultivate my skills as a leader in both technical and management areas. But perhaps the most valuable advice I’ve received from Sheila to date is more personal: Take vacations! Admittedly, I’m still working on taking this advice, but I see the overwhelming benefits to giving oneself a well-deserved break once in a while.



**Kyle Hereth**  
Business Development Coordinator  
Wendel

*“Kyle brings a thoughtful, relationship focused approach to business development, helping position Wendel’s engineering services for continued growth. She has a strong instinct for identifying opportunities, connecting with clients, and building part-*

*nerships that last. Her work supports both market expansion and long term strategy, while her involvement in professional organizations and nonprofit leadership reflects her commitment to the broader community. Kyle’s energy and perspective continue to make a meaningful impact across the team.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Construction has always been part of my life. My father owned a welding company, so job sites were familiar to me from a very young age. I have vivid memories of being a kid and hearing him point to buildings and say, “I worked on that. I built that.” That idea that your work can leave a visible legacy left a lasting impression on me.

What continues to inspire me is the tangible impact of what we do. In this industry, you don’t have to wonder if your work made a difference, you can see it, walk through it, and experience it. The buildings we create will outlast us, and being able to influence their design, functionality, and longevity is incredibly rewarding.



**Nina Ballou, AICP**  
Planner  
Wendel

*“Nina brings a thoughtful, people-centered approach to planning, shaped by experience across public, private, and nonprofit work. She understands how Sustainable Design, Urban Design, and Economic Planning intersect at the community level and applies that perspective to guide projects*

*that are both practical and forward-looking. Nina collaborates easily with stakeholders and keeps projects moving with clarity and purpose, always focused on creating inclusive, healthy environments.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Ever since I can remember, I’ve been fascinated by the built environment. I even had a teacher in grade school yell at me for doodling city skylines on my papers. I took woodshop throughout high school, which eventually led me to major in Architecture. However, after one semester, I realized my fascination wasn’t just with the building itself, but with the people who use buildings, how communities access them, and why development happens where it does in the first place. I started taking classes in history, geography, sociology, and public policy, and eventually realized Urban Planning was the path for me. Since graduating, I’ve worked in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors, which has given me experience with everything from policy and environmental review to construction and community engagement.

# From Concept Through Completion



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**Mervin Madriaga**  
Director of Inspire Events  
Inspire by Silverstein Properties



**Jillian Hoffman**  
Inspire Events Manager  
Inspire by Silverstein Properties

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I've always enjoyed creating experiences that bring people together. My career began in luxury hospitality, where I learned the value of exceptional service and attention to detail. That passion led me into event management, combining creativity, operations, and relationship-building. Over time, I transitioned into corporate events, managing programs of all sizes and eventually advancing into my current role as director of Inspire Events.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I'm most proud of helping build and grow

the Inspire Events platform at the World Trade Center. It has been rewarding to transform our spaces into destinations for impactful corporate, cultural, and community experiences. The success of the program reflects strong collaboration across teams and demonstrates how thoughtfully designed events can strengthen relationships, support business goals, and create memorable experiences for attendees.

*"Mervin and Jillian are both standout emerging leaders whose passion, initiative, and dedication consistently elevate both our team and guest experiences. Through their leadership on key projects and commitment to excellence, they have driven meaningful measurable results while inspiring the colleagues around them. Their ability to blend operational excellence with genuine hospitality makes them true Rising Stars with a promising future in our industry."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Growing up in the Midwest, hospitality always came naturally to me. I genuinely enjoy creating experiences that make people happy. I began my career in musical theatre and initially entered the hospitality field through restaurants and hotel work as my

survival job. Through these jobs, I found a true love of building a community in a shared space. I found an opportunity with Silverstein Properties through a temp agency, and the rest is history. Three years later, I've found my home planning engaging events that bring together the commercial community in Manhattan.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

One of the biggest opportunities in commercial real estate is the growing demand for hospitality-driven experiences. As companies continue navigating the post-COVID workplace, people need meaningful reasons to come into the office beyond their desks.

## Where Hospitality Meets Productivity

Inspire by Silverstein Properties redefines the workplace experience, blending community, wellness, and connection across our world-class buildings. From stunning offices at the World Trade Center to thoughtfully curated amenities and events, Inspire brings the art of hospitality to every workspace.

Our mission is simple - to make every day at work feel inspired.

Learn more at [inspireworkandlife.com](https://inspireworkandlife.com) | @inspire\_silvprop

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WITH ESTABLISHED OFFICES IN MANHATTAN AND LONG ISLAND, WE SERVE AS A TRUSTED LEGAL PARTNER ACROSS NEW YORK'S DYNAMIC BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT.

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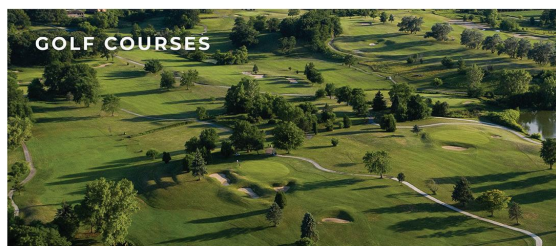
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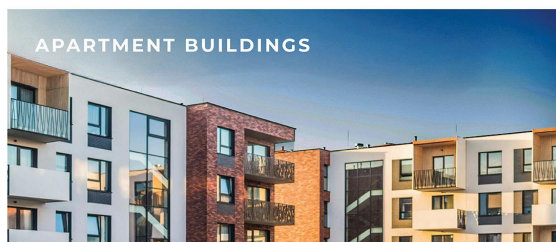
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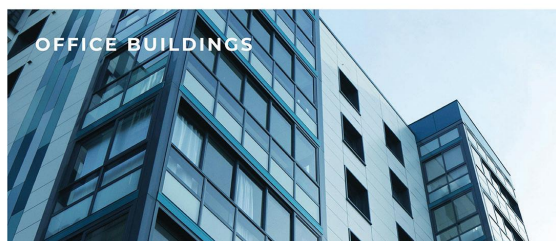
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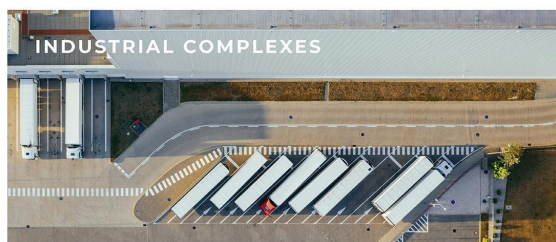
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ATTORNEY ADVERTISING. PRIOR RESULTS DO NOT GUARANTEE A SIMILAR OUTCOME.



**Avery Boxell**  
 Director, Real Estate Services  
 Katz, Sapper & Miller

*"Avery Boxell stands out for his leadership, technical expertise, and commitment to building both people and organizations. A trusted adviser to real estate investors, developers, and owners, he is recognized for his expertise in Qualified Opportunity Zones, partnership taxation, and strategic tax planning. After relocating from Indianapolis to New York to support KSM's growth, Avery helped integrate the firm's New York City office and build a culture of mentorship, collaboration, and growth."*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I am heavily involved with developments in Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs) across the country. The QOZ program was created through tax reform in 2017 and was recently extended and made permanent. These deals offer immense tax benefits, allowing investors to defer, and potentially eliminate a portion of, their capital gains tax liability at the onset, with the opportunity to exclude all gains upon exit. I often find that real estate clients are well positioned to capture these tax benefits, and while complex, helping structure them is rewarding given the value they add for clients.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

There have been many people who have influenced my career, but Kent Manuel stands out. Kent was a partner at KSM who essentially established the firm's real estate practice. Through our work on shared clients, I learned from Kent that the best way to serve real estate clients is to do the hard work of always being prepared, use tax knowledge to find solutions to clients' problems, and treat people fairly. One of Kent's quotes that has stayed with me is, "You may never be the smartest person in the room, but you can always be the most well-prepared." Kent was often both.



**Douglas Elsbeck**  
 Partner  
 King & Spalding LLP

*"Doug is the rare talent who combines sharp legal instincts with genuine investment in his colleagues' growth. He mentors junior associates with patience and precision, always taking time to explain the strategic thinking behind complex deal structures. His dedication to clients and tireless work ethic have quickly made him indispensable to King & Spalding's real estate and funds practice."*

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

Two trends stand out. First, experienced institutional investors are increasingly seeking bespoke investment opportunities through co-investments, club deals and other structures to allow more precise allocation of capital and higher level of governance beyond traditional commingled funds. Second, fund sponsors are increasingly exploring retail investor markets through programs like Opportunity Zone investing, a trend I expect to continue with the potential availability of 401(k) capital in the future.

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I've always been drawn to the intersection of finance and real estate especially how capital formation shapes communities and drives growth. Combining my economics background with law practice, I deliver practical, business-oriented advice. I specialize in private investment funds, advising sponsors on the formation of investment vehicles across sectors, with a focus on real assets, and related corporate advisory, M&A and strategic investments. My experience across diverse transactions enables me to deliver a differentiated service helping clients advance their businesses.



**Thomas Kelly**  
 Licensed Real Estate Salesperson  
 Douglas Elliman Commercial Division

*"Thomas Kelly has brought the same dedication and commitment he possesses for his successful Law career to the office every day!"*

*Upon joining our team, TK dove in headfirst and was able to quickly prove that he has what it takes to succeed in an ever-changing environment! He has faced challenges head on, tackled them and continues to move forward with positivity. He has immersed himself in the culture of our office, which is TEAMWORK! It is a pleasure to work alongside of him!"*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

The competitive nature of the business truly drove me to pursue this as a career! As a former professional lacrosse player and Division I coach, I've always thrived in competitive, relationship-driven environments. While I loved coaching, the travel and recruiting, demands made it difficult to maintain the family balance I wanted. Commercial real estate gave me the opportunity to stay competitive, work closely with people, and build a career while being present for my wife and daughter.



**Natalie McIntosh**  
 Associate Attorney  
 Herman Katz, LLP

*"Natalie has contributed substantially on an Article 78/Declaratory Challenge involving sewer taxes. She has undertaken*

*property inspections involving unique property types which has enabled her to assist in property valuation analysis. Client feedback on how Natalie has represented the firm is extremely positive, and she has already introduced new clients to the firm. Natalie is a valuable contributor to Herman Katz, LLP and is on her way to becoming a very prominent property tax attorney."*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

My first encounter with Tax Certiorari law was during the summer of my second year of law school as an intern for Herman Katz, LLP. Having no prior experience in property tax, I'm incredibly proud of my growth in the field. I'm most proud of my flexibility in supporting the legal team at the firm. I have been involved in numerous projects including two complex litigation matters, on-site client visits and property inspections, court appearances, and property analyses.



**Matthew Terracciano**  
 Senior Associate  
 Goldman Copeland

*"Matt Terracciano deserves to be recognized as a Rising Star, because his extraordinary combination of skills provides a model for what leadership in this industry should*

*embody. He draws on great expertise, curiosity, and creativity in approaching engineering challenges and developing efficient effective solutions. He fulfills commitments made to others, is supportive of colleagues and a mentor to junior staff, and is dedicated to serving clients and to achieving their goals with integrity."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I earned bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from NYU Tandon, where I published multiple research papers on heat transfer in power cables. While I began in technical research, early consulting engineering internships made me increasingly interested in applying electrical engineering to the built environment, leading me to pursue consulting engineering full-time. It enables me to explore the latest developments in electrical engineering and turn complex technical challenges into practical systems that improve how people live, work, and connect.



**Melisa Yepes-Schaefer**  
 Senior Associate  
 Goldman Copeland

*"Melisa exemplifies the next generation of industry leadership through a strong commitment to excellence, innovation,*

*and client service. Her ability to deliver results, build meaningful relationships, and contribute to the success of our team have distinguished her as a rising star. We are proud to see Melisa's hard work, dedication, and impact recognized by NYREJ's Ones to Watch program."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Growing up in New York City, I was naturally exposed to the construction industry, which offers many opportunities for mechanical engineers. More than 10 years ago, I began my career in the field and quickly discovered how much I enjoy the challenges and problem-solving involved in the work. For a mechanical engineer, every project presents an opportunity to learn and grow. I've been fortunate to take on projects that interest me and continually expand my skills, which has kept me excited about the industry ever since.



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CONGRATULATES  
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*for your recognition in the*

**NYREJ Ones To Watch  
Rising Stars Spotlight**

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**Justin Geffner**  
NYS Real Estate Salesperson  
RTL

*“Justin exemplifies the qualities we look for in the next generation of real estate professionals. He combines a strong work ethic with genuine passion, consistently demonstrating professionalism, persistence, and commitment to his clients. His ability to build relationships, embrace challenges, and grow makes him one of the industry’s emerging talents. We are proud to have him at RTL and confident he will make a meaningful impact on New York City commercial real estate.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My passion for real estate took root at an early age, confirmed by a residential internship at Corcoran in 2023 where I gained firsthand exposure to the industry. While at Florida State University, I immersed myself in commercial real estate and quickly realized brokerage was where I could best combine my entrepreneurial mindset, relationship-building skills, and passion for helping businesses grow. Joining RTL was a natural next step, and since day one I have been focused on building my career in commercial brokerage while learning from the best in the industry.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

More than any individual transaction, I take pride in building genuine, lasting relationships with tenants, landlords, and industry professionals, the foundation of every successful deal. One transaction that stands out early in my career was leasing 4,500 s/f to Body Alive Fitness at 28 East 4<sup>th</sup> St. The deal required months of persistence, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. Seeing a first-time New York City operator secure the right location was incredibly rewarding and reinforced the value of staying committed throughout every stage of a transaction.

*accelerating his growth and development within the business. Clients consistently praise his responsiveness and commitment to providing exceptional service. Dovi also possesses a natural ability to connect with both clients and lenders, and he approaches every opportunity with a genuine desire to learn. He embodies all the qualities we value in a young broker, and I have no doubt he has a bright future ahead as an industry leader.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I’ve always had a passion for real estate. At 12 years old, I spent Sundays riding my bike around my Los Angeles neighborhood visiting open houses. I made a point to speak with the sales brokers, ask questions, and even help show prospective buyers around. As I began pursuing a career in real estate more seriously, I met Henry Stimler, who took me under his wing and introduced me to the capital markets business. From that moment on, I knew I had found my passion.

*but pushed through with hard work, determination, and a positive attitude. He quickly became a trusted superintendent our clients love, and his transition to project management has been just as impressive. Proud of Mike, just getting started, and the best is ahead.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My father was a carpenter when I was growing up, and he’d always show me the projects he was most proud of. I could see how much each one meant to him. I was fascinated by the work and always wanted to understand how everything came together. I knew I wanted to be in the construction industry, but I wasn’t sure in what capacity, so I decided to study construction management to figure that out. After graduation, I connected with CM&B and was hired right out of school. I spent five years in the field and, earlier this year, transitioned into a project manager role.



**Dovi Levy**  
Associate  
Meridian Capital Group

*“From the day Dovi joined Meridian, he has demonstrated a level of drive and focus that is rare for a young broker. He goes the extra mile to understand the details of every negotiation and transaction,*



**Mike Esquivel-Lieb**  
Project Manager  
CM&B

*“Mike’s career path at CM&B is one of my favorites. He joined us from Virginia Tech and found the first six months challenging,*



**Emily Garbacki**  
Audit Senior  
Grassi

*“Emily stands out not only for her strong work ethic and attention to detail, but also for her positive attitude and willingness*



**Margaret Hom**  
Director of Finance  
Findigs

*“In roughly her first year, Maggie built Findigs’ entire finance function from the ground up. Reporting, models, forecasting, all of it, while the company was scaling fast and the ground kept moving. Most people would spend a year learning the room. She spent it building the thing the company now runs on. That speed, and that scope, is what*



**Michelle Roveto**  
Assistant Project Manager  
LMJ Management & Construction Inc.

*“Michelle Roveto brings strong initiative and consistency to her role at LMJ Management & Construction as an assistant project manager. She takes ownership of her work and approaches complex projects with confidence and attention to detail. She also leads all training for incoming APMs, reflecting the confidence the firm has in her abilities. Her steady growth, strong work ethic, and*

*to take on new challenges. She brings a thoughtful approach to her work and builds meaningful relationships with both her team and clients. It was clear early on that she had the drive and potential to grow, making her a natural choice for this recognition.”*

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

The construction industry is being shaped by increasing project complexity, rising material costs, and ongoing cash flow pressures stemming from billing and collection delays. We’re also seeing more joint ventures as companies pursue larger projects and meet bonding requirements. At the same time, technology is transforming how we work; AI, automation, and real-time project tracking are improving visibility and efficiency. Professionals who combine strong technical expertise with adaptability and a relationship-focused approach will be best positioned to drive value in the years ahead.

*makes her a Rising Star.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I’m most proud of building Findigs’ finance function from scratch. When I first joined the company, there was a lot to juggle, such as reporting infrastructure, financial models, and forecasting processes, and I had to do it all as the company was growing quickly. Developing systems, and then implementing them so that leadership could make confident decisions with clear financial visibility, was meaningful. It created the entire foundation on which the whole company now runs. Seeing that the infrastructure is still in place as we’ve grown has made me proud.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

My first boss really shaped how I think about leadership and instilled in me the importance of asking questions. The world changes, industries shift, and no one knows what’s coming next, but he taught me that the people who successfully navigate it all are the ones who stay curious. And in a field like proptech, carrying that mindset and sentiment feels more important than ever.

*professionalism clearly set her apart as a Rising Star within the firm.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

My proudest achievement at LMJ is my work on the Ares project, the largest contract our firm has ever secured. When you break it down, it is essentially four distinct projects of the exact same high complexity, all launching simultaneously. Successfully balancing the demands of these concurrent projects has been a major milestone in my career and has allowed me to showcase my growth and capabilities as an assistant project manager.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

Josh Seiden, our CEO, has been an invaluable mentor to me at LMJ. The best advice he has given me is “don’t be afraid to ask the question.” In the construction industry, clarity and precision are everything. Embracing this proactive mindset has fueled my professional curiosity, allowed me to gain a deep understanding of our operations, and has enabled me to master complex concepts quickly, collaborate effectively with our project teams, and continuously accelerate my growth.

CONGRATULATIONS  
**JUSTIN GEFNER**



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Congratulations

**Emily Garbaki**

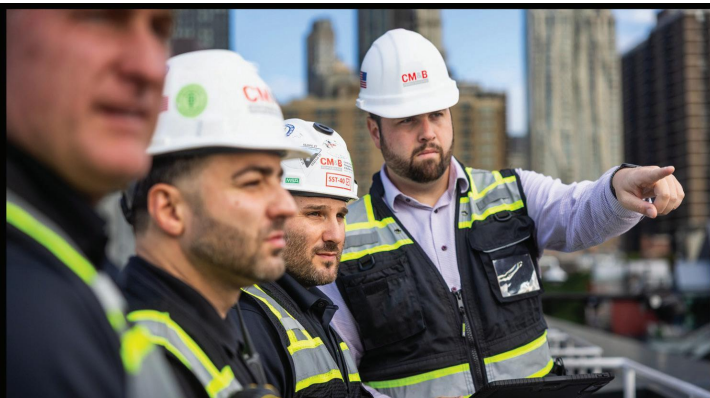
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*Congratulations to Michelle Roveto*  
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**Corey McCluskey**  
Project Designer  
SBLM Architects PC

*“Corey’s rapid acceleration from a college intern to managing and designing a uniquely specialized building within a compressed period of time shows his commitment to his professional growth as he paves his way towards a very successful future.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My passion for architecture fostered itself

in the most organic way possible. Before I could fully speak, my parents recall my fascination with building structures from wooden blocks. As I grew older, those projects became more ambitious, evolving from gazebos and sheds to ziplines and tree houses. That early curiosity led me to earn the College of Architecture’s most prestigious full-tuition scholarship at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where I refined my understanding of spatial design, building technologies, and construction before launching my career as an Architectural Designer.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

My proudest accomplishment has been leading the design and coordination of my first ground-up project: an animal research facility featuring outdoor learning spaces within an active orchard, a classroom integrated with a reptile lab, and three custom bird aviaries. The project involved an exceptionally complex program, extensive consultant coordination, and designing environments for occupants that cannot communicate verbally. Through biomimicry and parametric design, I developed strategies involving sunlight analysis and environmental manipulation to shape an immersive educational space.



**Madeleine McGrory**  
Vice President, Real Estate  
Kasirer LLC

*“Madeleine is thoughtful, deeply knowledgeable, and a pleasure to work with. She is always prepared, never leaving a detail overlooked. For our clients, she is a guiding hand, and a discerning ear. Few can navigate the city’s complex regulatory processes with her dexterity and verve. We are beyond glad to have her on our team.”*

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

Housing affordability remains the defining challenge and opportunity of our time, and it requires creative zoning, policy, and partnerships to address. There is a growing public appetite to understand the real mechanics of development. Communities want to know how projects actually work, not just what is being built. The developers and partners who communicate transparently, demonstrate affordability and sustainability, and engage meaningfully with stakeholders will lead the industry forward.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

My Columbia graduate thesis advisor gave me advice I still return to regularly. When I was starting my job search and unsure which direction to take, she told me to “go where you want to learn next.” That simple guidance reframed everything for me. I have built my career around seeking roles that broaden my perspective, deepen my understanding, and challenge me to grow. That mindset has led me to engaging work and the kind of mentors who invest seriously in the people around them, and I have been deliberate about finding and staying close to those people ever since.



**Erik Moloney**  
Investment Sales Associate  
Ariel Property Advisors

*“Erik has quickly established himself as one of the most dynamic young professionals here at Ariel. In a short period of time, his*

*exceptional work ethic, strategic insight, and dedication to our clients have driven tremendous success. He is a strong asset to our firm and absolutely one to watch in the industry.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I’ve always believed the universe responds to effort. I was drawn to commercial real estate because it’s an industry where there are no shortcuts—success is dependent on your willingness to learn and your work ethic. My path began at Manhattan College, where minoring in real estate development and leading the student real estate club sparked my passion for the NYC investment sales landscape. Joining Ariel Property Advisors provided the perfect environment to channel that energy, surrounded by a collaborative team that values continuous improvement just as much as executing for clients.



**Rob Page**  
Investment Sales Associate  
Highcap Group

*“Through his client-focused approach, Rob has already demonstrated the qualities of a true industry leader. One of his greatest strengths is his natural ability to connect with*

*people, creating authentic and trustworthy relationships built on transparency and personalized service. Clients appreciate his attentive, personalized approach and his commitment to understanding their unique goals and needs. His dedication has positioned him as a rising professional in the real estate industry.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Real estate provides a frictionless, flexible barrier to entry, with virtually limitless potential that surrounds you with hungry people who have a leverageable capacity for creative investment that surpasses people who like to day trade. This is what drew me to the industry when I first started dabbling in 2008, it’s what drew me back in 2015, and again in 2025. Working in service of the diverse group of people known as commercial property owners is like reading countless living biographies on the innumerable paths to compounding wealth.



**Marissa Heater**  
Account Executive  
USI Insurance Services

*“Marissa is diligent, organized, and always does the right thing for the client. She is tenacious with underwriters to get the best result. Eager to learn, she uses her knowledge as a building block to produce better outcomes. Marissa is easy to teach*

*and embraces feedback positively. She communicates often, on point, and has a high sense of urgency. She truly cares about the clients she serves. She shares her knowledge to develop younger team mates.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I didn’t intend to land in insurance, but it was the way things worked out for me. What I thought would be a corporate stepping stone to get in as a receptionist, turned into an insurance career almost 15 years since then. I believe everything happens for a reason, and I am at my current role as a result of how things turned out in my mid-twenties. I wouldn’t change anything.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of how far I’ve come in the five years at USI, which is by far the most progress I’ve made as a professional in the years I’ve been in the industry. I think becoming someone who my other colleagues look up to or call for help is something I never thought would be a reality.



**Christopher Moyer**  
Development Associate  
NYC Public Housing Preservation Trust

*“Chris is a key member of the project finance and development team. While he regularly leverages his strong commitment to, and in-depth experience with, RAD/Section 8 conversions, public housing is also an*

*academic focus for Chris. He and his co-author/curator Susanne Schindler developed a case study and a current (2026) exhibit at the National Public Housing Museum related to his prior work at the Cambridge Housing Authority. Chris’ creative thinking and commitment are a gift to the industry.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My career path began with a lifelong fascination with cities, shaped by growing up between New York and Tokyo. I’ve always loved riding transit, walking around neighborhoods, and questioning how we organize our lives spatially and the priorities that take precedent. This interest led me to study architectural history, where I was introduced to the promises and failures of Pruitt-Igoe. It sparked a deeper interest in understanding how housing outcomes are shaped not just by design, but by policy, management, and social conditions, which I bring to my current role in public housing redevelopment.

# DeSimone

**Congratulations to An Outstanding Engineer and Colleague**



**Joseph P. Donato, PE**

Senior Project Manager  
DeSimone Consulting Engineering

for being honored as a

**2026 New York Real Estate Journal  
Rising Star**

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Congratulations to  
**Marissa Heater**



on your recognition as a **Rising Star**  
in commercial real estate

Thank you for your ongoing commitment,  
hard work, and dedication on behalf of our clients,  
and for reaching your 5-year milestone with USI.

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Director of Finance at Findigs



**Congratulations  
Maggie Hom!**

For being recognized as one of NYREJ'S  
2026 Rising Stars.

Congratulations

**Erik Moloney**

on being selected as one  
of the NYREJ's 2026

Ones to Watch  
Rising Stars





**Freddy Souid**  
Director  
KSR

*"Freddy Souid embodies what it means to be a Rising Star. He joined our firm as an intern while still in high school and immediately stood out through his work ethic, discipline, and passion for commercial real estate. After graduating, he became a licensed agent and quickly grew into a lead-*

*ership role, now co-heading a team of five professionals. His drive, client commitment, and dedication make him one of the industry's brightest young talents."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My journey into commercial real estate began the summer before my senior year of high school. When I secured an internship at a well-established and highly respected brokerage firm my father recommended. I was immediately drawn to the fast-paced, entrepreneurial environment. What started as a summer role turned into a true passion, and I've since built my career on hard work, continuous learning, and maximizing every opportunity to grow.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I'm proud of every transaction and relationship I've built although some that stand out are leasing 20,000 s/f at 1370 Bdwy. to SORA, representing Avery Hall & Gindi Capital with my team in bringing Intuit to 204 4th Ave., and representing JEMB in bringing Intuit to 1 Willoughby Sq.



**Melissa Melone, AIA**  
Senior Staff Architect  
Hoffmann Architects + Engineers

*"Melissa Melone demonstrates the kind of responsibility, wisdom, and initiative most architects spend their career cultivating, yet she is just five years out of architecture school. Not only did she rapidly earn licensure, but she also quickly developed a facility with building enclosure technology and rehabilitation that enabled her to assume greater responsibility for project management. Now an owner of the firm, she organizes charitable team-building events and mentors emerging professionals."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

From a young age, I was drawn to art and design. I was naturally curious and loved traveling, which sparked a unique appreciation for the built environment. That passion led me to pursue a degree in architecture at Syracuse University, where I received an education grounded in architectural history and theory. Through my studies, I developed a particular interest in existing buildings and historic preservation. That fascination ultimately led me to join Hoffmann Architects + Engineers after graduation, where I have continued to grow my career ever since.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is becoming a licensed architect. While my education provided a strong foundation, it was the professional experience and mentorship I received at Hoffmann that gave me the practical knowledge needed to successfully achieve this milestone. Becoming a licensed architect early in my career has allowed me to take on greater responsibility, continue growing professionally, and contribute to the firm in meaningful ways. I hope to continue that growth while encouraging the next generation of architects to pursue licensure.



**Saadia Ghazi**  
Real Estate Partner  
Seyfarth Shaw LLP

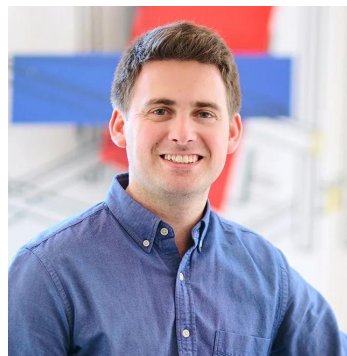
*"Saadia Ghazi stands out for her rare combination of technical depth and commercial judgment. She leads complex CMBS servicing matters with clarity and calm, earns the trust of clients and colleagues, and elevates those around her through thoughtful mentorship. Her work consistently advances client objectives while strengthening our firm's profile in the commercial real estate industry."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I was initially drawn to transactional law for its pace and problem-solving, but I gravitated toward commercial real estate finance because of how directly legal structuring impacts deal outcomes. Starting in corporate work gave me a strong foundation, and I later focused on CMBS and servicing matters, where I could combine that background with real asset complexity. That path ultimately led me to my current role advising servicers and lenders on structured finance and high-stakes servicing transactions.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

One of the accomplishments I'm most proud of is leading a master servicer through a first-of-its-kind preferred equity investment within a complex securitization. The transaction required bridging corporate and CMBS frameworks while navigating novel structural issues and multiple stakeholders. Seeing the deal close successfully, and knowing it created a practical roadmap for similar transactions, was especially rewarding because it delivered both immediate client value and broader market impact.



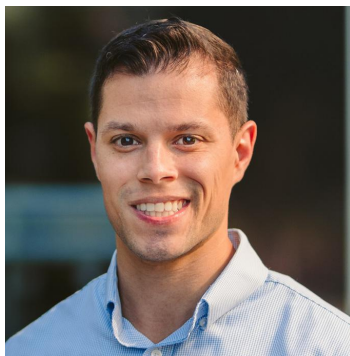
**Jake Spector, AIA**  
Project Architect  
Spectorgroup

*"Jake stands out for his ability to seamlessly bridge design intent and technical execution across some of the firm's most complex workplace projects. He brings clarity to challenging conditions,*

*aligns diverse project teams, and delivers high-quality outcomes without compromising design intent. Combined with his recent licensure, award-recognized project work, and commitment to mentoring emerging professionals, Jake represents the next generation of thoughtful leadership in architecture."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

There is something special about family business, and I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to continue one that stretches four generations of architects. At the start of my career and before joining Spectorgroup, I worked in construction as an estimator on the Pier 57 redevelopment, one of NYC's most ambitious adaptive reuse projects, which gave me a deep grounding in construction economics and large-scale delivery. That foundation informs how I approach design today: with equal attention to vision and execution, ensuring that what's designed can be built and built well.



**Michael Vulpis, P.E.**  
Project Civil Engineer  
H2M architects + engineers

*"Michael (Mike) Vulpis, P.E., is a dedicated civil engineer who has shaped H2M and the communities we serve for the better. A professional engineer with licensure in New York*

*and Connecticut, Mike's experience includes site layout, grading and drainage, stormwater management, erosion control, permitting, and construction administration. He has played pivotal roles on a wide range of projects such as hotels, parks, libraries, fire departments, multifamily housing, and universities."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Playing with Legos was an early creative outlet for me. I never followed the instructions on the kits, instead opting to design my own structures. My grandfather was a civil engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers, and he spearheaded big projects, including a two-mile stretch of boardwalk at Virginia Beach. Through him, I realized I wanted to channel my creativity into engineering. I started at a smaller firm, where I wore many different hats on projects. I learned a lot, but ultimately I wanted to work on larger projects that impact entire communities, which is why I came to H2M.



**Jeremy Kozin**  
Special Counsel, Real Estate  
Fried Frank

*"Jeremy is a well-rounded land use attorney who provides excellent client service. His experience advocating before City*

*and State agencies for some of the biggest developments in NYC, including New York Presbyterian Hospital, JPMorgan Chase's Park Ave. campus, and the Penn District, has gained him trust and respect in the industry. He is truly a rising star in NYC real estate."*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I have long been interested in studying cities, how they grow, evolve, and are influenced by public policy, economic forces, and community priorities. I was always into maps and geography and over time that interest deepened into a broader engagement with planning, politics, and the built environment. In college and law school, I gravitated toward environmental law and policy. That, combined with my love of New York, led me to practice zoning and land use in the private sector and being able to work with amazing practitioners at Fried Frank and work on significant skyline altering projects.



**Timothy Sudweeks**  
Senior Associate  
FXCollaborative

*“Tim has distinguished himself through his leadership on some of FXCollaborative’s most prominent projects, delivering exceptional results for clients while navigating significant technical and regulatory challenges. He understands how projects get built and how to make each project as high performing as possible within its constraints. His work demonstrates a balance of design excellence, strategic thinking, sustainability, and dedication to client service.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**



**Elisa Albuquerque**  
Associate Project Manager, PMP  
Group PMX

*“Elisa’s path to construction is anything but conventional — bringing together experience in law, architecture, and project*

*I’m most proud of my work on large-scale renovations and adaptive reuse projects. I have been involved in the repositioning of 3 Times Sq. since 2019, where our team has delivered over 20 projects for Rudin Management guided by a cohesive design vision. I am also working on 95 Madison, the conversion of a landmarked office building into a luxury residential condominium, which has presented unique design and regulatory challenges. Having previously worked with the client, Sunlight Development, on ground-up projects, it has been exciting to reimagine a historic building for a new purpose.*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

*I was always certain that I wanted to be an architect, and after graduating from Columbia University I partnered with a young architect to help establish a design-build practice from the ground up. That experience exposed me to every aspect of project delivery, from proposals and design to permitting and construction oversight. Eventually, I was ready to take on larger and more complex work, which led me to FXCollaborative. Moving into large-scale, ground-up projects expanded my skills and perspective, and I found myself drawn to the unknowns and possibilities inherent in renovation projects.*

*management to deliver thoughtful, impactful outcomes. A lifelong learner, she consistently seeks new ways to add value, proactively supports her team, and brings a broad, insightful perspective to every challenge. Her positivity, collaboration, and drive make her a true rising star in the industry.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

*I’m most proud of my current assignment: a multi-phased, half-billion-dollar corporate campus renovation for a global financial client, for which our firm was brought in to put back on track after it fell behind schedule and over budget. Our team reset the scope, phasing, and processes, and rebuilt collaboration among more than 100 stakeholders. Seeing consultants who once struggled to work together now lead joint lessons-learned sessions as we deliver the first phase shows what structured communication can accomplish.*

*EQ. He has an unwavering work ethic and commitment to his clients, and an unusual ability to negotiate and advocate aggressively while maintaining good will and a strong relationship with adversaries. He is clearly on the path to being a leader of the real estate transactional bar.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

*My entire family is in the building trades. I’ve always been interested in the built environment, and being a real estate development lawyer was the closest I could come to building without wielding a hammer. I also served in Wisconsin state government after college, rising to chief of staff to the lieutenant governor, and as her main advisor I developed relationships with key stakeholder groups. That experience honed my negotiating, planning, trouble-shooting and team-leading skills and prepared me for my current role, shepherding real estate projects through all stages of development.*



**Smita Garg**  
Principal Investment & Asset Manager  
SKG Capital

*“Smita Garg stands out for the breadth of her real estate investment, asset management and capital markets experience, as well as her ability to combine disciplined analysis with hands-on execution. She brings strategic judgment, accountability and clarity to complex decisions, helping strengthen portfolio performance while supporting long-term value creation.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in**

**your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

*My interest in real estate began early, shaped by watching my father build SKG Capital and seeing how ownership, operations and long-term thinking can affect communities. I started my career in real estate banking at J.P. Morgan, where I built a strong foundation in underwriting, credit analysis and deal structuring. Roles in institutional asset management and capital markets deepened that experience, ultimately leading me back to SKG Capital to help guide investment strategy and portfolio performance.*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

*One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is leading the \$400 million CMBS refinancing of 70 Pine St. while at Rose Associates. The asset was highly complex, with luxury rentals, an extended-stay hotel and retail within a landmark adaptive-reuse tower in Manhattan’s Financial District. The process required detailed underwriting, lender and rating-agency coordination, third-party diligence, capital partner alignment and execution across multiple stakeholders. The project reflected my ability to lead a large-scale financing and deliver a successful outcome under complex circumstances.*



**Remi Norris**  
Senior Associate  
TerraCRG

*“I’ve had the opportunity to work closely with Remi at TerraCRG, and it’s been impressive to see how quickly he’s developed.*

*He has a strong understanding of Brooklyn’s mixed-use and multifamily market, particularly in the downtown Brooklyn area and surrounding submarkets, and he approaches each deal with focus and discipline. Remi’s ability to build client trust and stay composed through complex negotiations has made him a standout early in his career.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

*The accomplishment I’m most proud of is the sale of 390 Court St. in Carroll Gardens. The property had been in the same family for generations, so it was about much more than getting a strong price. It was about earning the owners’ trust, understanding what mattered most to them, and helping guide them through an emotional and complex process. Seeing the deal through and helping the family transition a property that was such a big part of their history was incredibly rewarding. It reminded me that real estate is ultimately about people.*



**Cecilia Orduña**  
Assistant Project Manager  
Shawmut Design and Construction

*“Less than five years into her career, Cecilia has worked for some of New York’s most iconic and innovative organizations, from New York Public Library and Brooklyn Sports & Entertainment to Taconic Part-*

*ners and NYU Langone Health, building spaces that drive growth for the city and its communities. Cecilia is passionate about broadening industry access, serving as a mentor, raising awareness of the different career opportunities in construction, and championing inclusivity at Shawmut and beyond.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

*My work on the renovation of New York Public Library’s Aguilar branch. When our team faced unforeseen conditions, I helped resolve critical elevation and benchmarking issues alongside engineers and surveyors and led field investigations that informed the project’s approach to groundwater management. I also worked alongside Spanish-speaking crews which gave me the confidence to improve my Spanish, helping me build trust and communicate more effectively with trade partners. More than any single accomplishment, this project is meaningful because of how much I grew personally and professionally.*



**Matthew Dulak**  
Partner  
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, LLP

*“Matt is a superb real estate attorney, combining exceptional legal skills, knowledge, creativity and commercial judgement with equally outstanding people skills and*



### Julia Lee

Associate

Forchelli Deegan Terrana LLP

*“Julia is the type of colleague that you want to have, professionally and personally. Before I worked with her, she was my adversary in court. I knew then, she was diligent and dedicated. Now we are fortunate to have her on our side! Julia comes to work every morning with an industrious mindset. She is willing to get her hands dirty on matters large and small. In her time with the practice, she has developed a sterling reputation with*

*adversaries, judges and clients.”*

#### **What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I'm most proud of helping CRE owners, developers and REITs achieve meaningful reductions in their real estate tax burden. These savings can improve asset performance, increase value and create opportunities for reinvestment. The work is especially gratifying because no two properties are the same. Each tax challenge requires a thorough understanding of the property, the market and the factors driving value. Seeing the direct impact that my efforts have on a client's ability to grow, invest and succeed is what continues to make this work so rewarding.

#### **What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

Commercial real estate is undergoing constant change, driven by e-commerce, evolving work patterns and shifting consumer demand. These challenges can create opportunities for owners who can reposition assets via adaptive reuse or redevelopment. Equally important is controlling expenses through tax appeals, incentives and exemptions. Owners who stay flexible, identify value opportunities early and proactively manage costs will be best positioned to succeed in any market cycle.



### Billy Diakakis

Vice President

SABRE

*“Billy's rise from Rookie of the Year to vice president reflects his dedication, professionalism, and client-first mindset. He has built an impressive track record representing leading brands and property owners across Long Island and the tri-state area, earning trust through thoughtful guidance and consistent results. His ability to foster long-term partnerships and create opportunities for growth makes him one of the industry's emerging leaders to watch.”*

#### **What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

Rather than a single transaction, I'm most proud of building long-term relationships and

becoming a trusted resource for clients as they grow. Representing brands across the fitness, medical, wellness, food, and beauty sectors has allowed me to help shape communities throughout Long Island and the tri-state area. Seeing clients expand from one location to several and knowing I played a role in that growth is the most rewarding part of my career.

#### **Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

I've been fortunate to learn from several leaders at SABRE, but Doug Bomzer had a particularly strong influence early in my career. His advice to focus on relationships before transactions has guided my approach ever since. In a business built on trust, being responsive, honest, and willing to help without expecting immediate results creates lasting value. Many of my strongest relationships began long before a deal was ever on the table.

#### **What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My path into commercial real estate was unconventional. After earning a biology degree, I spent several years in building management, where I gained an appreciation for how real estate impacts businesses and communities. That experience led me to brokerage and ultimately to SABRE in 2018. Today, as vice president, I specialize in retail leasing throughout the NY Metro area, helping tenants and landlords execute strategic growth plans and maximize real estate value.



### Hugo Donath

Associate, Investments  
North Bridge

*“From day one, it was clear Hugo Donath was someone who thinks differently. Thoughtful beyond his years, relentlessly curious, and*

*hungry in the best possible way, he approaches every deal with creative rigor and a maturity you rarely see at this stage of a career. Hugo will do whatever is needed to complete a project and that kind of commitment lifts everyone around him.”*

#### **Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

A piece of advice that will stay with me forever came from a close family friend in Melbourne — an accomplished real estate professional who has since passed. He would always say: “Hugo, ears open, eyes open, mouth shut.” He taught me the power of absorbing knowledge—listening to everyone and everything so you can make the most informed decision. In an industry built on relationships and information, that lesson has been invaluable, reminding me that the best decisions come from listening first. It's this guidance that has shaped both my professional and personal life.

*homes and contemporary multifamily living in the region.”*

#### **What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My grandparents inspired me to pursue a career in architecture. One grandfather was an interior designer and one an aerospace engineer. From a young age I was always fascinated with building and construction. From drawing in school to building models, I knew architecture was the only path for me. I interned during co-op semesters in the Hamptons and landed at MSA after completing grad school. I was attracted to the firm because of the diversity of work where I could learn commercial design while integrating my residential experience.

#### **What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I am very excited and proud of two residences we are currently working on, one in Old Westbury and the other in Asharoken. The exterior design fits into the site using natural materials and unique geometry. The renderings look magical. I cannot wait till we break ground on these two incredible homes and I am grateful to be part of them.



### Harrison Keller

Designer

Mojo Stumer Associates

*“Harrison Keller is a rising force at Mojo Stumer Associates, shaping the firm's residential and multifamily projects across Long Island with a refined modern sensibility and meticulous attention to detail. He transforms strong conceptual ideas into cohesive, buildable architecture that elevates both custom*



### Charlotte Bell

Senior Vice President of Housing  
Habitat for Humanity NYC and Westchester

*“Charlotte Bell exemplifies the next generation of housing leaders. Her deep commitment to preserving affordable homeownership, combined with her expertise in community engagement, cooperative housing, and housing preservation, has expanded Habitat NYC and Westchester's impact across the region. Charlotte approaches every challenge with creativity, collaboration, and a steadfast belief that housing should provide dignity, stability, and opportunity for all.”*

#### **What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

Throughout my career, whether in tenant organizing, community development, or cooperative preservation, my focus has remained the same: helping people stay in their homes and communities. One accomplishment I am particularly proud of is helping expand Habitat for Humanity's post-purchase and preservation work. By growing programs that support existing low- and moderate-income homeowners, we have broadened our impact beyond newly developed homes to serve residents in cooperatives, condominiums, and single-family properties across New York City and Westchester.

#### **What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I began my career as a tenant organizer in East Harlem in 2008. That experience deepened my understanding of New Yorkers' housing challenges and sparked my interest in community-driven solutions. As I learned more about limited-equity cooperatives and shared ownership models, I became committed to helping residents build long-term stakes in their communities. That passion led me into cooperative development and preservation work, ultimately bringing me to Habitat for Humanity, where I focus on building affordable homeownership for working families.

To view complete responses to the  
2026 Ones to Watch - Rising Stars Spotlight  
visit us online at [www.nyrej.com](http://www.nyrej.com)



**Rachel Goodgal**  
Senior Policy & Programs Analyst  
Bright Power

*“Rachel Goodgal stands out in our industry: she makes complicated things navigable for building owners and managers. Rachel has exceptional knowledge of NY State’s multifamily energy incentive landscape and consistently turns that knowledge into real dollars and solutions for our clients. She’s sharp, thorough, and genuinely passionate about improving the built environment.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career**

**in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I have been passionate about climate change mitigation since high school. I originally moved to New York to pursue an acting career, but I also became involved in climate advocacy organizations. Like many actors, I struggled to gain a foothold in that industry, and I was spending more and more time on climate advocacy. I decided to pivot my career, and I had the opportunity to pursue an MPA in Environmental Science & Policy. A professor helped me find a job at an energy efficiency trade association, which in turn led to my current role at Bright Power.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I lead Bright Power’s participation in NY-SERDA’s Owner’s Representative Services for Multifamily Buildings, a unique new program that helps multifamily buildings overcome challenges to building efficiency and decarbonization. As an owner’s rep provider, Bright Power helps property owners overcome the soft barriers that often delay or prevent projects, such as project planning, incentive procurement, and relationship management. It has been exciting to help buildings make improvements that save energy, reduce utility costs, and decrease emissions.



**Kyle Wood**  
Director of Business Development  
ARCO National Construction | Albany

*“Kyle is a standout, emerging leader with a deep understanding of our value proposition and a strong client-service mindset. What sets him apart is his rare combination*

*of technical expertise as both an engineer and builder, coupled with a keen understanding of ARCO’s role throughout the real estate transaction lifecycle. This enables him to serve as a trusted advisor, tailor solutions to each client’s needs, and drive ARCO’s continued growth across the Capital Region and Upstate New York.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I’m most proud of relocating to Albany to help launch ARCO’s newest office and expand our presence throughout Upstate New York. In a close-knit community like Albany, everything is centered around relationships, trust, and reputation. Our goal is to bring unique value with our design-build process and contribute to the growth of the Capital Region and beyond. Seeing our efforts translate into meaningful opportunities and a growing presence in the region has been incredibly rewarding. We are proud to have multiple projects under construction, and several exciting projects on the horizon.



**Eric Wright**  
Vice President, Investments  
Safehold Inc.

*“Eric exemplifies the qualities of a Rising Star. A disciplined originator with sharp analytical instincts and a creative approach to deal structuring, he has helped close more than \$2 billion in transactions since*

*2014 across ground leases, mortgages, mezzanine debt, preferred equity, and joint venture capital. Now focused on ground lease originations, he pairs a collaborative approach with rigorous underwriting expertise, distinguishing himself as an emerging leader in commercial real estate.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I’ve always been fascinated by the built environment and the role real estate plays in shaping communities and creating economic opportunities. After studying real estate finance, I joined iStar because of its reputation for innovation and willingness to challenge conventional thinking. In 2017, we saw a better way for owners to unlock the value of the land beneath their buildings, and we launched Safehold as the creator of the modern ground lease. Today, we’ve deployed over \$7 billion across 165 ground leases nationwide, and I originate new investments across the eastern half of the U.S.



**Matthew Gibbons**  
Partner  
Gibson Dunn

*“Matthew Gibbons has established himself as a trusted advisor on some of the market’s most sophisticated real estate finance transactions. He is regularly relied*

*upon to navigate complex capital structures, deliver practical, business-focused solutions, and lead high-profile deals with confidence. Combined with his leadership within the firm, commitment to mentorship, and growing industry recognition, Matthew exemplifies the next generation of leaders in real estate finance.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I was drawn to real estate finance because it combines legal complexity, business strategy, and tangible impact. Early in my career, I was most engaged by sophisticated transactions requiring creative structuring and collaboration across stakeholders. That interest led me to real estate finance, where I now advise financial institutions, sponsors, and lenders on complex deals across the capital stack. At Gibson Dunn, I’ve worked on transformative transactions while building client relationships and mentoring junior attorneys.



**Avelina Burbridge**  
Counsel  
Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP

*“Avelina stands out as a rising star for her leadership within Davis Polk’s Real Estate practice and her work on sophisticated, high-profile transactions for some*

*of the largest players in the United States. In addition to her client work, she has demonstrated a strong commitment to the profession through the creation and launch of Davis Polk’s Women in Real Estate series, bringing together senior women leaders across the industry to discuss pressing real estate issues and challenges.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

As a young lawyer, I recognized how relationship-centric both real estate and the practice of law are, and I was fortunate to find early mentors who inspired me to pursue a career in real estate. Over the years, I cultivated strong relationships with colleagues, clients and counterparties. Ultimately, those relationships led me to my current role at Davis Polk, and they continue to be the most rewarding part of my job. I enjoy serving as a trusted adviser to my clients and working alongside a team that is committed to building each other up and helping one another succeed.



**Dylan Vaccaro**  
Residential and Retail Acquisition  
Time Equities, Inc

*“Dylan Vaccaro exemplifies the next generation of CRE leadership. Defined by strategic underwriting acumen, bold investment vision, hands-on governance experience, and a commitment to strengthening industry dialogue through self-built community platforms, Mr. Vaccaro is a standout real estate leader today and sure-fire needle-mover for the industry’s future.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I’m most proud of sourcing and helping lead Time Equities’ acquisition of 323 East 19<sup>th</sup> St. in Brooklyn, the firm’s first New York City multifamily acquisition in over a decade. I was involved throughout the entire process, from sourcing and underwriting to diligence, closing, and ongoing asset management. The transaction helped reestablish our multifamily investment pipeline and gave me full-cycle ownership of a deal from origination through execution and stabilization.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

Francis Greenburger has been a great mentor. He often says that the only thing you can truly control in real estate is the purchase price. He has encouraged me to take ownership before it is formally assigned, essentially to think and operate like a CEO from day one. In commercial real estate, he emphasizes that the fastest growth comes from mastering the details, following up relentlessly, and becoming useful across every part of the business. He encourages us to be in rooms where we are slightly uncomfortable, since that is often where the most meaningful development happens.



**Brandon Serota**  
Director  
Arrow Real Estate Advisors

*“Brandon stands out for his professionalism, strong work ethic, and ability to build lasting relationships. He approaches every opportunity with a client-first mindset and consistently delivers results. His growth in the industry has been impressive, and I have no doubt he has a bright future ahead.”*

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

One of the most influential figures in my career has been Morris Betesh, who I’ve worked alongside for the past six years. His mentorship has played a major role in shaping both my business approach and growth in the

industry. One lesson that has always stuck with me is his belief that successful brokers need both “likeability and capability.” Combined with the work ethic my father instilled in me growing up, those influences continue to shape how I approach relationships, transactions, and my career overall.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

One of the deals I’m most proud of was arranging a \$69.7 million bridge loan for Targo Capital’s acquisition of a seven-property mixed-use portfolio across downtown Manhattan. As one of my earliest clients, it was rewarding to help them execute their largest transaction to date by providing real-time capital markets feedback and generating strong lender interest in a competitive environment. Helping clients grow and scale their platforms is one of the most fulfilling parts of what I do.

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I’ve always been passionate about real estate, originally envisioning a career in residential sales before realizing I could apply my sales background to the commercial side. Starting in investment sales gave me a strong foundation in underwriting and market dynamics, while working alongside Morris Betesh helped guide me toward debt and equity finance. Over the past six years, I’ve developed a passion for helping developers and value-add investors structure and execute complex capital stacks.



**Shaun McDonnell**  
Managing Director  
Standard Brokerage Company

*“Shaun has become the firm’s go-to resource through his reliability, market knowledge, and team-first approach. Since joining SBC, he has played a key role in several of the Capital Regions most notable commercial real estate transactions and has earned the trust of clients and colleagues through his professionalism and work ethic. Shaun consistently takes transactions from start to*

*finish, handling challenges with adaptability, responsiveness, and a strong commitment to client service.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Right out of college, I spent 15 years working on Wall St. but always had an interest in real estate and development. When I attended graduate school, I was able to take an elective focused on commercial real estate and learn underwriting, Argus, and the CMBS markets, which really inspired me to make a career change. My background in finance has been a huge help in assisting clients with their underwriting.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

A few months after I started on the brokerage side of the industry, I had the opportunity to work on an assignment finding a manufacturing facility for a Canadian HDPE pipe manufacturing company. They were looking to open their first U.S. location, and we worked on a multi-state, multi-market search for them. They ended up going BTS, which was the first project I was able to see go from raw land through the approvals and construction process to a fully operational location.



**Madalyn Pimental**  
Project Director - National Account  
Chelsea Lighting

*“Maddy’s 10-year path to director says a lot about her work ethic and consistency. She’s someone you can always count on to*

*get the job done right, which is why clients often ask for her by name. With strong relationships, deep industry know-how, and a natural leadership style, she’s become a go-to leader and a trusted presence across the board”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I was drawn to the lighting industry because it allows me to help shape spaces for some of the world’s most recognized companies and create environments where New Yorkers work and spend their time. Lighting helps shape those spaces in a real and visible way. The fast pace of New York construction brings new challenges every day, keeping the work engaging and helping me grow professionally. Chelsea Lighting has pushed me to continue developing my skills and over time I have grown into a project management role where I can learn from experienced mentors, and continue to help develop new talent.



**Jacob Brenner**  
Associate Director  
Adirondack Capital Partners

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

Helping lead the sale of Omni Plaza, a 415,000 s/f, two-tower office portfolio in the core of downtown Albany, NY. Both buildings were significantly under-occu-

piated, so the assignment wasn’t about selling existing cash flow. It was about helping the market see what the asset could become. We positioned the offering on its value-add and adaptive-reuse upside, delivering a basis well below replacement cost and a buyer planning to convert space into roughly 120 market-rate apartments. It reflects a thesis I believe in: recognizing value others overlook is the heart of this business.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

Michael Coghill, my managing partner. Having come up when the industry was much different, he sees shifts coming before most firms realize they’ve already missed them. He operates with a rare combination of discipline, integrity, and generosity, and his ability to read both information and people is a genuine superpower I hope to grow into. The most valuable lesson I’ve taken from him: just because something has always been done one way doesn’t make it the best way. That mindset now shapes how I approach every assignment.



**Hector Pineda**  
Senior Project Manager  
Denham Wolf

*“Hector is a key part of Denham Wolf’s project management team, significantly contributing to project successes. He has recently completed major renovations for HAFTR and Covenant House International’s new offices. Hector exemplifies his commitment through his expert knowledge of the real estate development process, relationship management, and dedication to growing his design and construction skills. Clients have consistently recognized*

*his steady approach to managing complex teams and projects.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Growing up, I actively volunteered at community centers throughout Los Angeles. My background closely aligns with the communities served by our nonprofit clients. Those early experiences of helping others inspired me to pursue a career in real estate development focused on creating positive social impact. I take pride in contributing to projects that help nonprofit organizations strengthen their missions and supporting the communities they serve to make a meaningful impact.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

One of my proudest achievements is the new headquarters for Covenant House International - an essential space for staff to provide life-changing programs and services for youth facing homelessness. This complex project required extensive coordination and adaptability due to diverse public and private funding sources and managing multiple internal and external stakeholders. Despite the challenges, our team successfully delivered a facility that supports the organization’s crucial day-to-day operations.

To view complete responses to the  
**2026 Ones to Watch -**  
**Rising Stars Spotlight**  
visit us online at [www.nyrej.com](http://www.nyrej.com)



**Michael Lin**  
Design Director  
Gensler

*“Michael Lin brings a rare combination of design vision, technical fluency, and commercial understanding to some of New York’s most complex office developments. He is recognized not only for advancing high-performing, future-ready buildings, but for the leadership and mentorship he brings to the next generation of designers.”*

**What accomplishment or project so**



**Tom O’Meara**  
Project Manager  
Concept Construction Services Inc.

*“Tom O’Meara is an exceptional project manager whose work ethic, leadership, and problem-solving mindset drives successful project outcomes. He leads with professionalism, accountability, and a team-first mindset, earning the trust of clients and colleagues alike. Tom’s ability to navigate complex challenges while maintaining focus on quality, schedule, and client satisfaction makes him*



**Grace Belisle**  
Project Engineer  
VHB

*“Grace brings strong instincts, consistency, and a steady approach to complex civil engineering work. She is reliable in*



**far in your career are you most proud of?**

70 Hudson Yards, one of Manhattan’s most prominent trophy office developments, was something I was involved in from its early design phases. Designed by Gensler and Roger Ferris + Partners, my work helped shape the building to ensure long-term performance across evolving leasing cycles and workplace trends. Following the pandemic, we moved toward a “neighborhood based” model, prioritizing flexibility, experiential variety, and distinct floor-by-floor environments supporting collaboration, focus, wellness, and hospitality-driven amenities to align with today’s office building market in NYC.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

The future of office design will be shaped by the continued flight to quality and the need for more adaptable, human-centered buildings. Tenants want workplaces that support collaboration, focus, wellness, talent attraction, and a stronger sense of identity. The opportunity is to bring architecture, interiors, amenity strategy, and operational thinking together earlier, creating buildings that are not only compelling on day one, but resilient, high-performing, and competitive over many leasing cycles.

*an invaluable asset to concepts. I am proud to call Tom a peer and colleague.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

Growing up in Ireland, some of my earliest memories are on construction sites, where my grandfather and uncles worked. That exposure gave me a front-row seat to the craft and sparked my fascination with how structures evolve and landscapes change. I was drawn to project management for its blend of people, process, and problem-solving. After my studies, I moved into commercial construction in New York, joining concepts and working on complex projects that push my growth. At 26, I’m fortunate to operate at a PM level.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

The construction sector is at an exciting, transformative stage. Digital tools like BIM, drone surveying, and AI-driven scheduling are reshaping how projects are planned and delivered, giving firms a clear edge in efficiency and cost control. At the same time, modular construction is gaining traction globally, offering faster timelines and reduced waste, both essential in today’s cost-pressured environment.

*fast-moving, multidisciplinary environments and contributes meaningfully across teams to keep projects progressing. Her professionalism and growth trajectory reflect the qualities of someone with clear leadership potential.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I’ve always been drawn to sustainability and how engineering can directly improve communities. At SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, I studied Environmental Science and Forestry, I studied Environmental Resources Engineering and learned how those principles translate into real-world projects. That foundation led me to work on infrastructure projects, where I experienced firsthand how civil engineering shapes neighborhoods over time. When NYC advanced its Unified Stormwater Rule, it aligned with my background and led me to VHB, where I focus on delivering resilient, connected sites with long-term public benefit.



**Heena Shah**  
Project Architect  
DIG Architecture

*“For all projects, especially complex assignments, Heena expertly balances the needs of clients, design teams, governing-authority stakeholders and contractors. Her uncanny sharp eye for detail and tireless efforts to achieve innovative solutions – all while maintaining a “big-picture” viewpoint – translates to on-time groundbreaking designs. Unflappable under deadline pressure, Heena is truly a standout leader.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

The project I am most proud of is the Inline Baggage Handling Project for United Airlines at Newark Liberty International Airport. This three-story, 70,000 s/f facility centralized baggage handling and TSA screening operations for Terminal C, replacing multiple standalone screening systems. The project required complex integration with the existing



**Blake Jenkins**  
CRE Private Banker  
Peapack Private Bank & Trust

*“Blake Jenkins has quickly distinguished himself as a rising leader through his dedication to clients, strong market knowledge, and ability to build lasting relationships. His professionalism, work ethic, and commitment to delivering exceptional results have made a meaningful impact on our team and the communities we serve. Blake’s future in commercial real estate is exceptionally bright, making him truly deserving of this recognition.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My interest in commercial real estate began on the development side of the industry, where I worked on ground-up multifamily, mixed-use, and industrial projects. During COVID, I pursued opportunities outside of

terminal and significant modifications within an active airport environment. It was my first project with United Airlines and marked the beginning of a strong, ongoing professional relationship with both United Airlines and the Port Authority.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

I had the opportunity to work with Edmond Hakimian, whose mentorship played a significant role in developing my strong understanding of NYC zoning regulations and building codes. That expertise became a cornerstone of my professional development, shaping the projects I undertook and providing knowledge I continue to rely on every day in my practice. A guiding principle consistently upheld was finding effective solutions as a team rather than assigning “blame.” Prioritizing teamwork and fostering open collaboration when addressing challenges has helped me deliver successful outcomes.

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My interest in architecture developed from a strong appreciation for both design and problem-solving. I was particularly drawn to the opportunity to create spaces that are not only visually compelling but also functional for the people who use them. Throughout my career, I have worked on a diverse range of residential and commercial projects, each of which deepened my understanding of the profession. My technical expertise, combined with a keen attention to detail, has enabled me to successfully lead and deliver complex projects.

real estate that strengthened my business development and client relationship skills. After joining Peapack Private Bank & Trust, I was eager to transition to the commercial real estate lending team and reconnect with the industry I was passionate about. Today, my development background helps me better understand my clients’ perspectives and provide more thoughtful financing solutions.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

One accomplishment I am particularly proud of is being recognized as a Gold Ambassador at Peapack Private Bank & Trust. The award celebrates colleagues who consistently demonstrate integrity, teamwork, and a client-first mindset. While it is an internal recognition, what I value most is the trust placed in me by my peers and leadership. It reflects my commitment to supporting clients, collaborating across teams, and contributing to a culture that prioritizes exceptional service and accountability.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

One of the most influential figures in my career has been my current manager, Joe Fingerhagen. He has consistently encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone by involving me in client meetings, industry events, and relationship-building opportunities. The most valuable advice he has shared is that success in commercial real estate is driven by both technical expertise and the ability to build meaningful relationships. That perspective has helped shape how I approach my career and professional growth.



**Mark Neelman**  
Senior Associate  
SAB Capital

*“Mark distinguishes himself through his ability to identify and align with each client’s investment criteria and financial objectives, translating that insight into*

*transactions that reach the closing table. His talent for connecting the right buyers, sellers, and capital sources ensures deals are structured for execution, not just origination. Moreover, his ability to consistently refine his approach based on client feedback and evolving market conditions reflects the hallmark of a true advisor.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I’m most proud of the trust I have earned from the investors, owners, and families I represent. By developing deep expertise across shopping centers, net-lease assets, and 1031 Exchanges, I’ve been able to place capital for family clients-turned-close relationships totaling \$180 million in commercial real estate volume. That commitment to delivering measurable results and exceptional service builds a business grounded in long-term relationships where clients return and refer others because of the value I consistently bring to every engagement.



**Shannon Bahnsen**  
Associate Attorney

Westerman Ball Ederer Miller Zucker & Sharfstein, LLP

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I was initially drawn to commercial real

estate because I enjoyed the balance between legal analysis, business strategy, and relationship-building that the practice requires. Every transaction is different, and the work has a direct impact on how businesses grow and operate. My career has developed over the past 14+ years through consistent exposure to a wide range of leasing matters, representing both landlords and tenants in the leasing of high-end properties, including retail, restaurant, office, industrial and other commercial properties in New York and across the US.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

I see retail leasing continuing to evolve around flexibility, experiential retail, and mixed-use development. Landlords and tenants are increasingly focused on creating destination spaces that drive foot traffic and customer engagement. In addition, redevelopment of shopping centers into mixed-use properties is creating new opportunities across the retail leasing sector.



**Arjun Sheth**  
Senior Associate  
Besen Partners

*“Arjun joined our team three years ago as has been on an exponential learning curve under the mentorship of our Hotel Advisory Group head Anudeep Gosal. He has been involved in the valuation of \$200MM worth of hotel assets in the Northeast region and has recently completed several transactions valued at \$20MM which he originated and helped to close. He has shown resilience in the face of disappointment, a good understanding of hotel underwriting and operations. Through his knowledge and*

*diligent efforts, Arjun has quickly gained trust amongst his clients and peers. He is a valued member of the team and we look forward to his continued success.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My family has been involved in real estate development in India, so I grew up around the business and saw how real estate can create long-term value through vision, relationships, and execution. I came to the U.S. to learn new ways of doing business in a more institutional and data-driven market. That path led me to commercial real estate brokerage, where I found my niche in hospitality investment sales and capital markets advisory across the Northeast.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

The biggest opportunity I see in hospitality real estate is bringing stronger capital markets execution to secondary and tertiary hotel markets. Many owners have strong assets but limited access to qualified buyers, lenders, and real-time market data. With tighter debt markets and upcoming loan maturities, owners will need advisors who understand both sales and financing. I believe hotel brokerage will continue shifting toward deeper advisory, market analytics, capital access, and creative exit strategies.



**Anna Bock**  
Associate Attorney  
Chaves Perlowitz Luftig LLP

*“Anna Bock has quickly distinguished herself as a rising leader in commercial real estate law through her exceptional legal acumen, dedication to client success, and ability to learn complex transactions and independently navigate with confidence and precision. Her collaborative approach, strong work ethic, and commitment to delivering practical solutions have earned the trust of clients and colleagues alike, positioning her as one of the industry’s emerging talents to watch.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

During my 2L summer internship in Manhattan, surrounded by iconic buildings, I realized I wanted to be part of creating something lasting. During this internship I discovered my passion for commercial real estate, drawn to its blend of complex drafting, strategic problem-solving, and collaboration to close transactions. After strengthening my legal writing and case management skills as a civil litigator, I joined Chaves Perlowitz Luftig’s Commercial Real Estate Group, where I now represent lenders in sophisticated financing transactions that help build, serve, and strengthen communities.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

The accomplishment I am most proud of is carrying my first commercial real estate transaction from inception to closing. During this deal, I was responsible for managing diligence review, drafting loan documents, coordinating with counsel to resolve closing issues, and overseeing closing logistics through completion. When the deal closed, I felt an incredible sense of accomplishment, knowing I had successfully managed the transaction and taken an important first step in building my career in commercial real estate finance.



**Anazette Ray**  
Principal  
Zetlin & De Chiara LLP

*“Anazette has worked on a number of important matters in the built environment and has established herself as a top*

*construction litigator. Her hard work and commitment have translated into achieving great results for her clients.”*

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

My mentors would be all the women in this field who have come before me. When I started in this field, there were just a handful of female attorneys in this practicing construction litigation. I can recall sitting at depositions in multi-part complex construction defect cases and seeing only a handful of female attorneys surrounded by twenty male counterparts. The female attorneys who came before me forged a path and opened doors, demonstrating that women have every right to be here and are just as capable of handling this field. It is great seeing more women become involved in this field.



**Talia Horwich**  
Account Executive  
The Berman Group

*“Talia embodies everything you hope to find in a rising professional: curiosity, determination, and an unwavering commitment*

*to growth. Watching her career develop has been one of the most rewarding parts of my time at Berman Group. She consistently pushes herself outside of her comfort zone, embraces every challenge as an opportunity to learn, and approaches her work with thoughtfulness and care. I could not be more proud of the professional she has become.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My path into real estate communications was anything but traditional. I originally studied music business and discovered public relations while exploring different corners of the industry. After working in communications for Grammy Award-winning artists and nonprofits, including the Otis Redding Foundation, I was drawn to real estate PR through my mother, who worked in the field. Joining Berman Group allowed me to combine my passion for storytelling with an industry I had long admired.



**Garvin Lee**  
Director  
Greystone

*“Garvin exemplifies the qualities that define the next generation in commercial real estate. His expertise, work ethic, and commitment to clients consistently set him apart. Beyond his strong execution, he brings thoughtful solutions to complex challenges in structured finance and has earned the trust of colleagues, clients, and industry partners alike.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in**

**your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I pursued a degree in finance with a concentration in real estate, so in many ways my career path has led me exactly where I expected to be. I have always been interested in the industry and the wide range of opportunities within commercial real estate. I am especially drawn to its tangible nature. Real estate shapes neighborhoods and communities, making the work both meaningful and rewarding. It is uniquely fulfilling to drive past a property I worked on and see the positive impact it has on the people and community around it.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I'm tasked with arranging financing for workforce and affordable housing. The country continues to face a significant housing shortage, and I am proud that I get to have a hand in helping people get access to affordable housing. It may not be the flashiest business, but strong and sustainable capital structures are critical to helping preserve affordable housing. I am also extremely proud of the reputation I have built with my clients and colleagues. In this industry, trust and execution are everything. I always strive to be available and dependable in order to execute for our clients.

*and client trust across the organization.”*

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

As chief marketing officer, contracts and compliance at Max Security USA, I lead growth, contracts, and compliance. I drive demand generation across residential, commercial, and large scale developments, producing qualified opportunities. I oversee RFPs through execution, ensuring clear scopes aligned with operations and commercial goals. I manage compliance, risk controls, and standards ensuring accountability, governance, and scalable delivery.

**Who has been a mentor or influential figure in your career, and what is the most valuable advice they have shared with you?**

A senior executive early in my career in security and operations has been highly influential. The most valuable advice was to always align what is promised in the market with what can be delivered in the field. They emphasized that strong growth is built on clear contracts, disciplined execution, and consistent accountability, because trust is what sustains long-term client relationships and scalability.

*portunity with professionalism and a strong sense of accountability, always looking for ways to improve as a broker and deepen his market knowledge. His commitment to growth and determination to deliver results has made him an invaluable part of our team and a broker with tremendous potential.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My inspiration for retail leasing came directly from NYC itself. Few places are defined so clearly by what happens at street level. The city's energy, culture, and identity are shaped by its storefronts, restaurants, cafés, and gathering places. I began brokerage to be closer to the deals, relationships, and businesses. I was drawn to the idea that every lease, whether a small shop or a flagship location, contributes to the character of a block and a whole neighborhood. That is what continues to inspire me and what makes this work so rewarding.



**Joe Siegfried**  
Senior Loan Originator  
Eastern Union

*“Joe Siegfried is a standout mortgage broker owing to his expertise, his attention to detail, and his passion for the industry. Reflecting his entrepreneurial approach, Joe has also launched an innovative FinanceCRE educational series on multiple social platforms. Joe is truly a “Rising Star” -- and we expect him to enjoy continued success at Eastern Union. We're delighted to have him on our team.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

I was drawn to commercial real estate finance because it combines business, real estate, and problem-solving. Over the past six years, I've helped finance properties across the country, including multifamily, retail, industrial, hospitality, construction, and owner-occupied assets. Today, as a Senior Loan Originator at Eastern Union, I structure financing solutions for clients while also educating investors and industry professionals through my FinanceCRE social media platforms.

**What trends or opportunities do you see shaping the future of your industry?**

With changing interest rates, tighter regulations, and evolving market conditions, borrowers need advisors who can think creatively and access a wide range of capital sources. Meantime, technology and social media make information more accessible and help connect professionals nationwide. Excellent opportunities exist for those who can combine expertise, education, and strong relationships. In this spirit, my FinanceCRE social media platforms help investors and professionals better understand lending, capital markets, and deal structuring.



**Joanna Pawlowska, M.S.**  
Chief Marketing Officer / Contracts  
Max Security USA

*“Joanna has been instrumental in aligning our growth strategy with operational execution. Her ability to translate market opportunities into structured, compliant, and deliverable security solutions sets her apart. She brings discipline to contracts, clarity to communication, and consistency to execution. She is a key driver of scalable growth*



**Jordana Garellek**  
Senior Associate  
Nutter

*“Few in the legal community are well-versed in the dense technical fields of both land use and intellectual property. Jordana Garellek is the rare exception, leveraging her wide-ranging experience to deliver winning strategies on high-stakes zoning, permitting, and litigation matters that advance the future of New York City. Developers, sellers, purchasers, and property owners rely on Jordana for forward-thinking legal counsel that brings a 360-degree perspective to this ever-evolving market.”*

**What inspired you to pursue a career in your industry, and what path brought you to your current role?**

My path to law began early, inspired by my grandfather, who served as an acting NYS Supreme Court judge, and the sense of justice I saw in his courtroom. I started my career in intellectual property, where legal analysis paired with my love of science and the search for truth. From there, I was mentored by real estate attorney Jon Popin, who taught me the complexities of land use and successful legal strategy. Today, I bring that same analytical approach to my role as a property lawyer, working at the intersection of tangible and intellectual property.

**What accomplishment or project so far in your career are you most proud of?**

I represented a developer in a complex zoning lot merger involving the purchase of tens of thousands of square feet of air rights to combine multiple parcels for a high-rise residential development in Manhattan. The multi-year effort required numerous zoning lot development agreements, careful negotiation and analysis of diverse owners' property rights, and constant attention to licensing issues to keep the project moving. Helping create a major assemblage for my client, and contributing to the New York skyline, remains one of my most rewarding accomplishments.



**Desi Avidane**  
Retail Leasing Director  
IPRG Retail Leasing

*“Desi has distinguished himself through a combination of drive, discipline, and an eagerness to learn. He approaches every op-*

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