

Press Release

Akerman Expands Los Angeles Office with Addition of Former Reading International General Counsel William Ellis

April 11, 2016

Firm Enhances Core Strengths in Real Estate and Financial Services Sectors

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, has bolstered its growing Los Angeles office with veteran real estate lawyer William “Bill” Ellis, who joins the firm as a partner in the Real Estate Practice Group. Ellis brings substantial experience to Akerman’s formidable real estate team, enhancing the firm’s transactional work on behalf of financial institutions and investment funds. As former general counsel of global real estate conglomerate Reading International, Inc., Ellis also expands the firm’s capabilities for domestic and international clients in the hospitality and retail sectors.

“Bill is an industry veteran, who is known for his experience in complex real estate transactions for institutional investors and lenders,” said Richard Bezold, Real Estate Practice Group Chair. “He brings tremendous market knowledge in the hospitality and retail sectors, and adds important depth to our fast-growing practice in Los Angeles and across the region.”

Ellis has more than thirty years of transactional real estate experience handling workouts and restructurings, leasing, acquisitions, dispositions,

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financings, joint ventures and developments across the United States. He works with private equity funds, global financial institutions, investment banks, real estate investment trusts, investment funds and private developers based both in New York and on the West Coast. He also has significant experience in corporate and securities transactions, including corporate mergers and acquisitions, and initial public offerings.

Ellis previously served as general counsel and NASDAQ-listed Reading International, Inc., the successor to Reading Railroad and now developer, owner and operator of retail and commercial real estate in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, including entertainment-themed retail centers, multiplex cinemas and live theater assets in Chicago and New York.

Ellis joins one of the largest legal teams in the real estate sector, according to *Law360*, which recently named Akerman for the second consecutive year among the top six U.S.-based law firms with the most global partners devoted to real estate law. In the past year, the Real Estate Practice Group has expanded in key U.S. markets, including Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York. In Los Angeles alone, the firm has added six real estate lawyers. In addition to Ellis, new real estate partners in Los Angeles include Jane Hinton and Herman Enayati.

About Akerman LLP

Akerman LLP is a leading transactions and trial law firm known for its core strengths in middle market M&A, within the financial services and real estate industries, and for a diverse Latin America practice. With more than 600 lawyers and government affairs professionals and a network of 20 offices, it is ranked among the top 100 law firms in the United States by *The American Lawyer* (2015). Akerman also is ranked among the top 50 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer's* Diversity Scorecard (2015).

Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group offers comprehensive and fully integrated project counsel services to clients across the United States and Latin America. With substantial industry experience and local market insights, the firm represents clients in complex real estate transactions and financings, development and redevelopment projects, public-private initiatives and litigation. Recognized as a national tier one law firm for real estate law by *U.S. News - Best Lawyers*, the group advises investors, developers, builders, lenders, retailers, owners and corporate end users, often in high profile matters.