

## Press Release

# Akerman Bolsters National Real Estate Practice with Specialized Finance Team in New York

February 14, 2019

## Group Expands Firm's Strengths in Real Estate Financing

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, today announced the national expansion of the firm's Real Estate Practice Group with the addition of a team of five lawyers in New York. [Alan Cohen](#), Randy Eckers, Michael Estreicher and Samuel Lee join Akerman as partners, bringing a robust skillset in the financing of significant real estate transactions to enhance the firm's current capabilities. In his new role at Akerman, Cohen will serve as chair of the firm's Real Estate Finance Practice.

Special Counsel Alexander (A.J.) Sokoloff also joins the new team. The group builds upon the firm's core strengths in real estate, and is particularly experienced in institutional lending and equity for real estate transactions, having represented major financial institutions, mortgage REITs, and investment funds. Their combined experience has allowed them to serve as counsel in a diverse array of commercial real estate transactions, from complex joint ventures to ground-up developments. The new additions complement Akerman's nationally recognized Economic Development and Incentives Practice, which assists clients with billions of dollars in local, state, and federal

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Alan S. Cohen  
Eric D. Rapkin

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incentive programs and custom discretionary economic incentives, including Qualified Opportunity Zones and Qualified Opportunity Fund formation, EB-5 financings, and tax credit and tax-exempt bond financings. This newly expanded team offers clients across the U.S. particular expertise with all aspects of the capital stack and in securing funding for complex commercial real estate projects.

“While any law firm would be absolutely thrilled to welcome a group of attorneys of this caliber and reputation, it’s even more thrilling for me as I’ve known Alan personally and professionally for more than 30 years,” said Eric Rapkin, chair of Akerman’s Real Estate Practice Group. “With an acute understanding of the financing of complex real estate projects, this market-leading finance team will help us better service our lender and borrower clients.”

“Akerman is consistently distinguished as one of the leading teams of real estate lawyers in the U.S., providing comprehensive and fully integrated services on sophisticated real estate transactions and construction projects,” said Cohen, who has worked with many Akerman lawyers for nearly 20 years. “We are extremely excited about joining Akerman in New York and view this opportunity as a win-win for us and our clients.”

### **Alan Cohen**

With more than 30 years of experience, Cohen has handled virtually every type of commercial real estate transaction over the course of his career. He is a real estate strategist, providing clients with a comprehensive view of the entire real estate landscape, from structured finance to ground-up developments, complex joint ventures, and workouts and restructurings. He helps clients negotiate advantageous transactions, often involving multiple parties and multiple layers of the capital stack. More recently, he focuses his practice on real estate finance, real estate development, real estate ventures

and real estate transactions within the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **Randy Eckers**

Eckers has 20 years of experience as a real estate finance attorney. He is recognized nationally as a leading finance lawyer and represents large lending institutions, private equity funds, developers, bond investors, and property owners in a wide variety of commercial real estate financing, structured financing and secondary market transactions.

### **Michael Estreicher**

Estreicher has more than 15 years of experience representing banks, financial institutions, investment funds, and other institutional investors, owners, and developers in a variety of commercial real estate and financing transactions. He regularly represents borrowers and lenders in all types of loan transactions, including CMBS, portfolio, mezzanine and construction loans. His work in this area is primarily focused on retail, residential (including condominiums), hotels, storage facilities, commercial and mixed-use assets.

### **Samuel Lee**

Lee has more than 15 years of experience representing financial institutions, banks, life insurance companies, investment funds and other institutional investors in a variety of commercial real estate finance transactions. He focuses his practice on the representation of these institutions in a wide variety of portfolio and secondary market transactions, including syndicated loans, securitized loans and other types of capital markets financings. He also regularly advises these institutions in the acquisition, disposition and restructuring of their interests in these financing structures.

### **A.J. Sokoloff**

Sokoloff represents banks, REITs, debt and private equity funds and developers in complex real estate transactions, including mortgage, mezzanine, syndicated loan financings and property

acquisitions. In the last year, he completed a secondment for a multinational investment bank and financial services company, where he served as in-house counsel and loan closer.

The five-lawyer team further expands the national footprint of Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group that, since 2018, has welcomed 21 new lawyers, including eight partners. Most recently, Partner Taylor Ward joined the firm's Orlando office, where he adds important experience in the hospitality and restaurant sectors. The arrival of Partners Mark McElree and Kacy Whitehead in Dallas expanded the real estate group's presence in Texas. The firm has also recently welcomed a three-member team to the Los Angeles office led by Partner Irán Hopkins.

### **About Akerman**

Akerman LLP is a top 100 U.S. law firm recognized among the most forward thinking firms in the industry by *Financial Times*. Its more than 700 lawyers and business professionals collaborate with the world's most successful enterprises and entrepreneurs to navigate change, seize opportunities, and help drive innovation and growth. Akerman is known for its results in middle market M&A and complex disputes, and for helping clients achieve their most important business objectives in the financial services, real estate and other dynamic sectors across the United States and Latin America.

Akerman's national Real Estate Finance Practice represents lenders and borrowers in a broad range of complex real estate financing transactions. Our team, which includes former in-house counsel from major multinational banks, is consistently recognized by *U.S. News – Best Lawyers*, *The Legal 500*, and *Law360* as a national leader in the real estate sector. We represent a number of the nation's largest financial institutions, institutional investors, investment banks, banking associations, life insurance companies, and developers in a variety of domestic and international matters, from the most sophisticated capital market transactions, to

workouts and bankruptcies, to more traditional conventional financings.