

As seen in



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COHEN & PERFETTO LLP – SMALL FIRM WITH POWER HITTERS

By: Peter Haas

“Baseball taught me the importance of passion and drive,” says Louis A. Perfetto the managing partner and one of three founding partners of Cohen & Perfetto LLP. “I may not have made it to the major leagues, but it showed me how to find success in whatever I do.”

Twenty years ago, Perfetto was on the fast track to becoming a professional baseball player. In the end, he decided that baseball was too much of a long-shot and instead he went to law school. Though Perfetto misses the game, he credits his years of hard work and determination on the diamond with helping him achieve high levels in real estate law.

Marshall J. Cohen and Jennifer C. Padnick, the two other founding partners of Cohen & Perfetto, exhibit similar passion. Their shared attitude became the foundation of the firm, and has since propelled Cohen & Perfetto to the forefront of New York real estate.

In the last two years, Cohen & Perfetto closed more than \$900 million worth of transactions representing a cross-section of the real estate industry from small family-owned businesses to Fortune 500 companies.

Among the firm’s more recent transactions:

- Cohen & Perfetto performed all work in connection with the acquisition of more than 1 million square feet of storage facilities for Storage Deluxe, the fastest growing self-storage company in the Tri-State area.
- An investor acquired a portfolio of Starbucks coffee houses across the United States. Cohen & Perfetto provided counsel and assistance for the deal, which involved a series of 1031 exchanges.
- Cohen & Perfetto assisted in the \$126-million sale of Manhattan Embassy, a building located on Manhattan’s East Side.
- Clear Channel Spectacolor was represented by Cohen & Perfetto in the negotiation of a variety of consents, releases, indemnities, contracts and insurance agreements – all completed in less than three weeks – in connection with “Mountain in the City,” Times Square’s first-ever live billboard.
- Cohen & Perfetto represented a group acquiring a 250,000 square-foot office building in Washington, DC. The deal, involving \$123 million, was closed in under four weeks.
- A group of individual investors was represented by Cohen & Perfetto as they closed a series of 1031 exchanges, including two \$50 million transactions involving zoning advice, the purchase of air rights, bonus FAR and 421-a tax credits.
- Cohen & Perfetto obtained more than \$5 million in government incentives on behalf of a publicly traded company.

Still young, still growing

While the firm is a recognized leader in real estate law, it is surprisingly new. Yet the partners who formed it – Marshall J. Cohen, Louis A. Perfetto and Jennifer C. Padnick – and the firm’s senior project manager, Christine Mulryan, have worked together for more than a dozen years. In fact, at their previous firm they were the majority of the real estate department, with Marshall and Louis serving as its co-managing partners, Jennifer as an associate, and Christine as a project manager.

In 2005, their business had grown to such an extent that they knew they needed their own space – literally and organizationally. Additionally, Perfetto saw a niche in the market that he knew his group could fill – a law firm where real estate professionals could come for all their legal and real estate needs, and where they could receive the personal attention of the partners. That attention is a hallmark of the firm: all deals receive the continuing, direct participation of a partner.

“We work to add value to every transaction,” says Perfetto. “We make sure that we are not only giving solid legal advice, but that we are also examining all aspects of a deal and providing a sound business view of every transaction. In that respect, we are truly full-service.”

The firm is constantly growing and changing to fit the needs of its clients. During its first two years, the number of staff tripled and a downtown office was added. Even now, the Manhattan based firm is looking to expand the number and location of the offices for serving clients. The most recent addition being an office in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

The partners of Cohen & Perfetto bring a wealth of diverse skills to their work.

Louis A. Perfetto was a co-managing partner at an earlier firm, where he also became the youngest partner in the firm’s history. There he co-chaired the real estate practice, and created and then expanded the banking practice. Today, as the managing partner of Cohen & Perfetto, Perfetto focuses on real estate transactions, banking, economic development, governmental incentives, conveyancing, commercial retail, office and ground leasing and financing. He is a well-recognized specialist in financings with New York City's Industrial Development Agency and New York State's Empire State Development Corp. Earlier, he led the team that for the first time in Staten Island acquired and rezoned the borough’s north shore property from manufacturing to residential use.

Marshall J. Cohen specializes in conveyancing, retail, office and ground leasing, and financing. He represents both foreign and domestic institutions in their acquisition programs, as well as individual investors and developers in their real estate transactions. He started his legal career as a member of the real estate department of Fried Frank, and eventually moved to another firm where he became co-managing partner and helped to develop a full-service real estate practice, which he has taken and expanded at Cohen & Perfetto.

Jennifer C. Padnick brings a well-rounded background in all aspects of commercial real estate law. She began her legal career in state government; and moved into private practice as an associate at J.P. Morgan's legal department. She later joined Mr. Cohen and Mr. Perfetto in their previous firm as an associate attorney on their real estate transactional team. Today, as a partner at Cohen & Perfetto, her practice encompasses all aspects of real estate transactional law, including conveyancing, sales and acquisitions, ground leasing, commercial leasing and financing for banks and borrowers.

Both Marshall and Louis are actively involved with the New York State Economic Development Council. Louis also serves on the advisory committees of several financial institutions, where he has helped advise them on evolving market conditions and legal developments. Further, the three partners annually sponsor Junior Achievement and March of Dimes through events in New York City.

The partners are busy in their home lives as well. Louis is the father of three young children, and calls on his sports background to coach their local Manhasset baseball, soccer and basketball leagues. Jennifer is enjoying bringing up a three-year-old son, while Marshall, relishing two new grandchildren, also serves on the boards of the Aston Magna Music Foundation and the Amputee Coalition of America.

“Cohen & Perfetto is unique in that it brings a personalized approach to real estate law,” says Louis Perfetto. “There is a basic philosophy that drives our firm – each client represents an important relationship to us, and every one of these relationships demands our complete attention and dedication. We make the connections that build these relationships, working to add depth and value to every partnership we forge and every transaction that transpires.”

Adds Marshall Cohen: “Whether your needs involve real estate, government incentives, banking, zoning or litigation, it’s not just a deal to us. It’s your deal, and we won’t stop until we’re sure it’s the right deal.”

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