

*As seen in*



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**Profile of the Week:  
Louis Perfetto, managing partner,  
Cohen & Perfetto LLP**

By: Jason Turcotte

At 18 years of age, Louis Perfetto passed on a professional baseball career. But Perfetto, now a managing partner at Cohen & Perfetto, has no regrets because, when it comes to real estate law, his expertise puts him in a league of his own.

Perfetto is one of the founding partners of Cohen & Perfetto, which he helped launch with Marshall Cohen three years ago, recognizing a need for a boutique real estate firm that specializes in all aspects of development, including land use, zoning, banking law, government incentives, lending, borrowing, tenants and landlords.

“We wanted to create a real estate boutique law firm that valued a tremendous work ethic and provided client services 24-7,” Perfetto said.

But Perfetto, a Brooklyn native, had little foresight into his successful law career. He initially enrolled in a pre-med program at college. And before that — at the age of 18 — he was invited by the Kansas City Royals and the Los Angeles Dodgers to take a swing at Major League Baseball.

“I was scouted by both and, to make a very long story short, at the end of the day — even though I was supposed to get drafted — I thought it was too much of a risk,” Perfetto said. At 18, the decision wasn’t easy for the standout shortstop, who calls the great American pastime his first love. “And to let go of your first love is always a hard thing to do,” he added.

But Perfetto — the first in the family to pursue a career in law or real estate — crafted a new love. After earning a Master’s degree in corporate finance, he expected to pursue corporate law, but the larger law firms were a turn-off for him. Once he met Cohen, he knew they’d make the perfect tandem. They spent 11 years together, co-chairing the real estate division at Stadtmauer Bailkin LLP (where Perfetto became the youngest partner in the firm’s history), before opening their own firm.

Throughout his career, Perfetto has represented middle market firms to Fortune 500 companies.

He led the acquisition and rezone of a Staten Island industrial property to a waterfront residential use.

The 10-acre project took seven years to complete and involved a balancing act of politics and zoning. But some projects Perfetto takes on require a quick turn around time.

“I think I probably like this because of the intensity,” he said.

Representing a limited partnership, Perfetto contracted and completed — within two weeks — the \$125 million sale of the Manhattan Embassy residential building with retail space. Additionally, he worked on the buyer's side of a \$123 million Washington, D.C. commercial building acquisition within a 1031 Exchange. What should've taken 60 days to complete, he wrapped up in 10. Those are examples of what he calls "24-7" deals, the kind that equate to home phone calls in the wee hours of the morning.

The firm, which receives a high volume of development, leasing and financing business, has represented projects in New York, North Carolina, Las Vegas, Texas, Pennsylvania and Florida, where they're working on a 280-acre residential development in a challenging market. While Perfetto's firm has seen growth in each of its three years in operation including 2008, today's market has impacted the pace of transactions. But he explained that it's not necessarily a bad thing.

"Transactions aren't as quick as they were a year ago. People today are more sensitive to cost, and I think that's a good thing," Perfetto said. "The market always need cleansing and the market always needs time to self-reflect."

Perfetto holds a B.A. from St. Joseph's College, a J.D. cum laude from Thomas M. Cooley Law School and an LL.M. from New York University. He lives on Long Island with his wife and three children.

His boys, ages six and three, play a plethora of sports including soccer, basketball, lacrosse and, of course, baseball — many of which Perfetto coaches. But ask him whether he's a Mets or Yankees fan, well, that depends on the month; he supports whichever team his sons root for at the time.

In the future, he expects more of the same at Cohen & Perfetto: continued excellence at a price point lower than competing firms.

And Perfetto says he doesn't have the ego to manage a 500-person law firm; he vows to maintain the business as a place clients turn to for extra attention. "Once it grows too big, it just becomes a factory, and I don't want it to be."

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