



Nike and NFL/Cirque de Soleil retail deals win at REBNY Deal of the Year Awards

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Pictured above (from left) are: REBNY retail committee members Fred Posniak of Empire State Realty Trust and Andrew Mandell of Ripco Real Estate Corp.; REBNY Retail Deal of the Year Award winners Joanne Podell and Kenji Ota of Cushman & Wakefield; and REBNY president John Banks.

New York, NY Retail deals completed on Fifth Ave. and in Times Sq. were announced as the top retail transactions of 2016 at the Real Estate Board of New York's (REBNY) 19th Annual Retail Deal of the Year Cocktail Party at Club 101 last night.

Joanne Podell, executive vice chairman at Cushman & Wakefield, was honored with The Most Ingenious Retail Deal of the Year that demonstrates exceptional broker acumen (ingenuity and creativity) for her deal: "From the Back of a Napkin to a Flagship: How Ice Cream Sundaes Brought Nike to 650 Fifth Avenue". This is her third time winning a REBNY Retail Deal of the Year Award.

Kenji Ota, executive director at Cushman & Wakefield, won The Most Significant Retail Deal of the Year, which recognizes the most significant retail deal in its overall characteristics and importance to the New York City retail market, for "Finding the End Zone – How the NFL Connected with Cirque du Soleil for a Times Square Touchdown" at 701 Seventh Ave., also known as 20 Times Square. This is his first time winning a REBNY Retail Deal of the Year Award.

"We congratulate Joanne and Kenji on these much-deserved honors and the positive impact of their deals on New York City's retail marketplace," said Andrew Mandell, managing partner of Ripco Real Estate and Chair of REBNY's Retail Committee. "Their diligence and determination to find solutions for every problem that arose during their complex negotiations made these transactions a significant win not just for their clients, but also for the greater retail community."

"The 14 retail transactions that competed for these prestigious awards demonstrated great professionalism, service, creativity, and dedication," John Banks, REBNY president. "Whether for a household brand, growing retail company, or new concept, the strategy, skill, and guidance of these outstanding experts played a critical role in each deal's success. We are proud to highlight their achievements and salute this year's award winners."

Sponsors of the 19th Annual Retail Deal of the Year Cocktail Party were: Cushman & Wakefield, Eastern Consolidated, Jack Resnick & Sons, Lee & Associates, Ripco Real Estate, Rose Associates, and The New York Times.

The Most Ingenious Retail Deal of the Year

Joanne Podell, an executive vice chairman at Cushman & Wakefield, brokered one of the largest transactions for a single-brand retailer in Manhattan: a nearly 70,000 s/f deal to relocate Nike's flagship store, Niketown, from 6 East 57th Street, its top New York City location since 1996, to 650 Fifth Ave. between Victoria's Secret and Zara. Podell has served as the exclusive representative for Nike in Manhattan and select markets throughout the country since 2004. This transaction, which started off as an exploratory search in 2008, was initiated in spring 2016 with a rough draft of the deal sketched out on the back of a napkin while Podell enjoyed ice cream sundaes with tenant and landlord representatives on Shelter Island. The eight-month long deal-making process that ensued as Podell meticulously poured over the high-profile, complex transaction, stayed largely consistent with the original draft. The deal accounted for shifting retail market conditions and the draw of Fifth Ave.'s high foot traffic and dynamic retail mix, while providing ingenious solutions for Nike's need for more space, greater visibility, and flexible floor plates to accommodate an innovative retail experience, as well as its standing lease obligations at 6 East 57th St. Through negotiations with existing tenants, property owner SL Green Realty Corp., and Jeff Sutton of Wharton Properties who maintains a long-term lease for several floors in the 36-story office building, Podell secured six floors plus the lower level of the 650 Fifth Avenue for Nike's undisputed global flagship to be delivered in 2020.

The Most Significant Retail Deal of the Year

Kenji Ota, executive director at Cushman & Wakefield, was honored for playing an integral role in connecting an unlikely pair, the National Football League (NFL) and Cirque du Soleil (CDS), to collaborate on a more than 40,000 s/f retail lease spanning four floors at The Witkoff Group's 20 Times Square new development. Through out-of-the-box solutions, Ota along with former colleague Eva Santiago, helped all parties navigate multifaceted challenges to set the stage for the NFL Experience Times Square, Cirque du Soleil's first official experiential sports venture. While the NFL has operated pop-up stores in New York City, this transaction marks first time that both iconic global brands will be establishing a long-term retail presence here. Securing the 20 Times Square space in 2016—which will include an approximately 350-seat theater, on-site retail, food and beverage offerings, and more—required immense canvassing, financial analyses, and negotiation to overcome obstacles including the significant project size and unique space requirements, deal structuring, economics, timing, and tax hurdles due to new construction. Scheduled to open in fall 2017, this experiential retail attraction is expected to anchor the north end of Times Square's Bowtie, establishing the area as an even more viable option for a variety of retail and entertainment concepts.