



2021 Ones to Watch: Danielle Grunwald, Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP

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Name: Danielle Grunwald

Title: Associate

Company Name: Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP

What led you to your current profession?

Because so much of law school curriculum revolves around reading case law and legal writing, I took advantage of an opportunity to try something else and enroll in a course offered at my law school called “Transactional Real Estate Deals.” The course was taught by a highly regarded real estate attorney in New York, and given my limited exposure to transactional law prior to that course, the experience was eye-opening. As a class, we were led through the anatomy of the most common types of documents negotiated in our field, including purchase and sale agreements and joint venture agreements. We learned how each party to a document might try to negotiate certain provisions based on their relative bargaining power, appetite for risk, and economic motivations. Not only was I drawn to how the practice was varied and challenging, but also to the fact that the work culminated in the development, ownership or financing of something tangible—real property. That was it for me.

Top three things on your bucket list:

Hike a glacier (before they’re all gone!), appear on “Jeopardy!,” and learn a different language.

What recent project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

Earlier this year, I represented a client on a \$750 million recapitalization of over 60 multifamily properties in New York City. The transaction was complicated because of the ownership structure and required an immense amount of coordination to close simultaneously under multiple contracts of sale, with different sellers, and to close the refinancing of each individual property. Apart from the substantive challenges that we had to overcome in order to get the deal done, closing the transaction was so rewarding because I had followed these assets through their entire life cycle with this client: from acquisition in 2013; to refinancing them a few years later; and ultimately culminating (for now) in the recapitalization that closed this year. My role in each successive phase became larger and more integral. Notably, the deal had been in the works for years but had stalled due to external factors, including issuance of new rent regulations and later COVID, so when it finally closed, it was a great result for our client.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles?

When leading a team, I try to maintain a collaborative environment that encourages asking questions and open communication to solve problems. It has always been so helpful to me to have colleagues who are receptive to questions and available to offer their perspectives as I think through issues. And I try to provide the same for any team with which I am working. Also, being willing to pitch in to complete whatever needs to be done to get a deal closed.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career?

I've been fortunate to have a number of mentors in my time at Stroock who have provided me with invaluable guidance both professionally and personally. I've had the privilege of having Steven Moskowitz and Karen Scanna, two brilliant and successful attorneys, as two of those mentors. They have provided me with so many opportunities to advance, build confidence and take ownership of transactions. They have collectively been so influential to me because they have such different approaches to negotiating, problem-solving and closing deals. I have been able to synthesize what I have learned from, and observed of, each of their styles in order to create my own way of practicing and combatting challenges.

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