

Latham Adds Leading Real Estate Partner in Chicago

By Dan Packel
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Latham & Watkins has landed the former leader of Dentons' U.S. real estate group as a partner in its Chicago office.

After nearly 20 years at Dentons and its U.S. predecessor Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, Robert Fernandez joined Latham as a partner in its corporate department and member of the firm's real estate practice.

Fernandez said that Latham presented a compelling opportunity to grow his real estate practice by moving into more high-end, complex transactional work. But it was not an easy decision.

"The relationships I'd formed over the years were really meaningful," he said.

Fernandez represents clients on a range of sophisticated real estate transactions, focusing on financings, acquisitions, dispositions, joint ventures, commercial leasing, and real estate development.

He said that the move was eased by his longtime connections with Chicago colleagues Robert Buday, global co-chairman of Latham's real estate practice, and Gary Axelrod, co-chairman of the firm's hospitality, gaming and leisure industry group, who initially reached out to him.

"Because of personal relationships with these folks, the proverbial picking up the phone and starting up the dialogue was pretty natural," he said. "It was not a quick courtship, but one that was on my end contemplative, as I know it was for them."

According to Buday, it helped that he and others had seen Fernandez in action.

"One of the things that we're principally focused on is excellence of lawyering," he said. "Having the opportunity to see Bob in action made it clear to us that he was



(Courtesy photo)

Robert Fernandez of Latham & Watkins

a practitioner of the caliber that we would be interested in filling an additional spot for us."

Fernandez was an obvious recruit, Buday said, pointing to his robust equity side practice as well as his deep debt experience, which will bolster Latham's debt capabilities both in Chicago and nationally.

"We want to build a balanced high-end real estate practice, and with that there were very few practitioners who actually fit that profile," he said.

In addition to handling both debt and equity transactions, Fernandez has experience representing large institutional lenders as well as real estate investors and borrowers.

"Bob is a first class friend and colleague who has been a valued part of our best-in-class global real estate practice," Dentons said in a statement. "We wish him all good things in his adventures ahead and look forward to continuing to work with him."

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