

# SARAH SHAW

## Helping Real Estate Clients Sprint to Deal's Finish Line

by Mike Bailey

Once the investment officers, accountants, bankers and consultants have charted the course, Sarah S. Shaw brings the two sides of a transaction together to agree on a contract or on loan documents.

The partner in the real estate group at Honigman LLP uses her skills to effectively and efficiently complete “the last mile” for her clients.

Clients such as Michael McVickar, general counsel for Origin Investments, recognize how important her work is in getting the deal over the finish line. But McVickar found out the hard way.

“Several years ago, I was looking for an attorney to assist with a real estate transaction involving a quasi-governmental agency, unique zoning restrictions and arcane property law, and Sarah’s name kept coming up,” McVickar admits. “Unfortunately, I learned how skilled she was in these transactions when she was retained by the party on the opposing side.”

That representation made a lasting impression, he says. “Sarah was tenacious, but also reasonable, fair and practical. It was this rare combination that made me want to engage her on future transactions.”

### LEARNING DIRT LAW AT CHICAGO TITLE

Shaw has been his “go-to” ever since. “She is meticulous in her work, accessible to our legal and business team, and provides advice and guidance to balance legal issues with business needs. She has a knack for simplifying and favorably structuring complex transactions. On top of all that, she is a pleasure to work with,” he says.

Shaw has been a real estate attorney her entire career. After graduating from Tulane Law School in New Orleans, her first job was with Chicago Title and Trust in Chicago as an attorney title examiner.

“I learned the basics of ‘dirt law’ and my training at Chicago Title gave me a foundation (no pun intended) for a career in real estate law,” she says. “I draw on those fundamentals even today.”

Her next position was an associate role at a boutique Chicago real estate law firm, Katz,



Randall and Weinberg. Each position since then has provided Shaw with the opportunity to work on a vast range of transactions, all of which involve real estate.

Before joining a large Chicago firm, Shaw was an associate counsel for a national retail REIT, working with both the investment and capital markets teams to dispose of non-core assets and to refinance the remaining portfolio of shopping centers located in several states.

Michael Hazinski, senior vice president, investments, for Retail Properties of America, Inc., known as RPAI, has come to appreciate the vast wealth of experience Shaw offers.

“I have worked with Sarah for nearly 10 years,” he says. “Sarah’s intricate knowledge of our internal procedures, areas of focus and overall risk assessment has added significant value for us.

“Sarah works hard behind the scenes, utilizing her contacts with title companies, vendors and a network of local attorneys, so the result is a seamless execution of the legal aspects of a deal.

“Our recent transaction history with Sarah includes the purchase of a trophy mixed-use asset on Chicago’s North Shore and a shopping center acquisition with a complex ground lease structure in the Seattle market.”

Shaw’s weighty experience in all aspects of real estate transactions has proven invaluable, her co-workers say.

“Sarah and I regularly worked together on complex real estate transactions,” says

former colleague Charles Murphy. He says she provides “practical insight from the client’s point of view due to her experience as an in-house counsel.”

### STAYING CURRENT AMID RAPID CHANGE

Andrew Torre, another former colleague who worked with Shaw, credits Shaw for being adept at business development and encouraging their real estate group to learn new technologies that allowed for simplification of processes.

Staying current is a priority for Shaw. Her young adult son and daughter are her trusted advisers when it comes to technology and trends at work and everywhere else, she says.

A desire to stay current and take advantage of all that Chicago has to offer these days prompted Shaw and her husband to move from the western suburbs, once the children had gone off to college, to a loft in River North. When she’s not working on a deal or implementing new initiatives for Honigman’s real estate group, she can be seen enjoying a restaurant or jogging in her new neighborhood.

“The way we practice real estate law is rapidly changing. For example, real estate records are now accessible online, we handle closings via emails, and there are apps to abstract leases and contracts. It is imperative to stay current,” says Shaw.

“With all the new tools available to real estate attorneys, the last mile is becoming a sprint, and I am excited each day to be part of the evolution.” ■