

## Illinois Powerhouse: Mayer Brown

By **Hannah Meisel**

*Law360, Springfield (October 11, 2017, 8:09 PM EDT)* -- As one of the oldest law firms in Chicago, Mayer Brown LLP has been a stalwart of the city's legal industry since 1881. But it's the firm's readiness to adapt to change and take on some of the newest and most challenging issues in the 21st century that has earned Mayer Brown a spot on Law360's Illinois Powerhouse list for 2017.

Through its 1,500 attorneys at two dozen offices worldwide, the firm has proved its global reach. But Mayer Brown's 351 attorneys in the founding office in Chicago show a hometown commitment by serving the city across its many industries and getting into the thick of Chicago and Illinois government.

Mayer Brown's Chicago office manager, Rebecca Eisner, said this commitment is paying off.

"The year's not over, but our practice is going gangbusters here in Chicago," she said in an interview last month. "In the last year we've had a broad range of terrific successes in the Chicago office."

Mayer Brown has its fingerprints all over some of the city's largest ongoing infrastructure projects, representing various public entities in deals like a planned hotel for Navy Pier, new lanes to relieve chronic congestion on the Adlai E. Stevenson Expressway, and an ambitious plan for upgrading the Chicago Transit Authority's Red and Purple lines, the two most heavily used railways in Chicago.

For that deal, the CTA needed to quickly come up with a plan to generate \$625 million in local matching funds in order to qualify for a \$1.1 billion federal grant to upgrade the railways. But the deal needed to get done before President Barack Obama left office, while it was still certain that the federal government would give out the grants.

Mayer Brown's team worked fast and helped the CTA navigate not only one government body but two. Mayer Brown lawyers drafted state legislation that authorized the creation of a first-of-its-kind, transit-only tax increment financing district, which was passed through the General Assembly. Then the team had to shepherd the plan through the Chicago City Council, where it passed unanimously last November.

But Mayer Brown's involvement with the city and state goes far beyond securing infrastructure funds, delving into the beast of Illinois and Chicago politics. Some of the firm's most prominent partners come



from government roles, including Mike Scodro, who returned to Mayer Brown in February to head up the firm's appellate practice, having spent more than six years as the Illinois solicitor general.

The government-to-Mayer Brown club also includes former Illinois Attorney General Tyrone Fahner, who has also served as an assistant U.S. attorney, Mitch Holzrichter, who recently served in the office of Gov. Bruce Rauner, and former assistant U.S. attorney Lori Lightfoot, who currently also serves as the president of Chicago's Police Board, which oversees discipline and accountability for the Police Department. Mayer Brown has also produced Illinois Northern District Judges Thomas Durkin, Robert Dow Jr., John Tharp Jr., Gary Feinerman and John Lee.

Andy Marovitz, co-leader of Mayer Brown's global litigation and dispute resolution practice, told Law360 that this deep bench of government experience serves his practice area well, citing several cases resolved on behalf of the city in the last year, including a racial bias suit brought by white and Hispanic police officers over the selection of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's security detail.

"I think it showed our ability to handle pretty high-stakes litigation in a political arena," Marovitz said in an interview last month.

Marovitz also pointed to the work of Lightfoot, who has worked on behalf of the Chicago Police Department and the Police Board. Lightfoot was first appointed to the board in 2015, and she was reappointed to the post by Emanuel in April.

But Marovitz's team handles more than city matters; the litigation group this past April defended and won a case for Citigroup Inc.'s mortgage unit in a nationwide class action that alleged CitiMortgage had improperly charged homeowners for property inspections conducted following a default on a mortgage loan. The suit is just one of the cases in which Mayer Brown is representing banks and other lending institutions.

"We're doing so much financial institution work," he said, echoing what Eisner also told Law360 about a "resurgence" of financial services in Chicago after many of the big banks that had been headquartered in Chicago left.

"The middle market is very, very active," Eisner said. "We're seeing a lot of bank activity. ...That's a frothy market and we're seeing traditional borrowing, lending and all manner of financial transactions continue to be very active."

In another case, the litigation team got a win for Rezidor Hotel Group when the Seventh Circuit affirmed a ruling dismissing the case from U.S. courts, holding that the plaintiffs in the case must pursue their claims in Serbia. The underlying case alleged that Rezidor was wrongfully operating a hotel on Serbian property that was seized from the plaintiffs' ancestors in the 1940s by the communist government.

Marovitz told Law360 that the Seventh Circuit's affirmation that American courts are not the appropriate venue for the claims may be inconvenient to the plaintiffs in the immediate, but he said that it will actually turn out to be a win on a global scale.

"Frankly, the law...of particular jurisdictions cannot advance unless there are actual cases that are considered there," Marovitz said. "So if you deprive jurisdictions of cases where they actually arise and they all get to be tried somewhere else, those courts, those judges don't have any opportunity to consider and advance the law there. And that's bad. Particularly as law becomes more global and as

companies become more global, it's important that these areas have an opportunity to advance and develop their own legal regimes."

Mayer Brown also helped Chicago-area industry leaders like Caterpillar Inc., W.W. Grainger, Baxter International, Northern Trust Corp. and BMO Harris Bank NA close multimillion-dollar deals in the last year. Marc Sperber, leader of the firm's global corporate and securities practice, told Law360 that he's particularly proud of the long-standing relationships Mayer Brown has with those valued clients.

But he's also looking forward to the work his team will oversee in emerging technology markets, like driverless car technology, insurance tech, financial tech and mortgage tech.

"I think we have something really special here," Sperber said. "We have a high-quality, deeply experienced bench of lawyers — I think the deepest bench you'll see in Chicago. We have an approach to our clients that I think our clients appreciate: thinking about bringing both the experience and the collaborative nature of our practice together to provide them seamless service across our platform of the highest quality."

--Editing by Jeremy Barker.