

TRAILBLAZERS

REAL ESTATE | CONSTRUCTION LAW

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What was the genesis of the idea that has made you a trailblazer?

Always put my clients' goals first.

We represent the owners of Hotel Chelsea in litigation with NYC's HPD prompted by tenants objecting to the hotel's redevelopment. Our goal was getting permits reinstated. Although we didn't need a certificate of no harassment, we made every effort to settle. When forced to go to trial, we were able to provide evidence to force HPD to withdraw its case. It was still worth trying to avoid the risk of trial.

Our client Beverly Hills Unified School District had a different set of concerns. We were challenging the route for the extension of Los Angeles' purple line subway, set to run under Beverly Hills High School. As a school board, the clients are primarily concerned with student safety. A win was knowing that they exhausted all options to keep the subway's alignment off the campus, to maintain public trust.

What sort of change has resulted from the concept?

When you prioritize clients' long-term objectives, practical progress not theoretical legal wins are what matter. We represent Continuum Company in response to opposition to the development of apartment towers near the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. A group of individuals stopped the process, claiming community board meetings about the project had to be in person, even during Covid. Although not true legally, my clients supported an in-person hearing to move the process forward. It didn't work; the petitioners would not agree with any option. Even so, our willingness to cooperate demonstrated the suit wasn't about community participation. After that, the judge vacated the TRO and permitted the community board meeting to proceed virtually.

What bearing will this have on the future?

Establishing a track record of putting clients first opens a lot of doors.