

## MVP: Simpson Thacher's Erik Quarfordt

By Julia Arciga

*Law360 (October 28, 2020, 1:24 PM EDT)* -- Erik Quarfordt of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP's real estate practice led private equity firm Blackstone in its over \$4 billion acquisition of Las Vegas resort the Bellagio, earning him a spot as one of Law360's 2020 Real Estate MVPs.

### ***HIS BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT THIS YEAR:***

Quarfordt considered his role representing Blackstone in its \$4.25 billion acquisition of the Bellagio from MGM Resorts to be his biggest accomplishment this year, stating the matter was complex and had a lot of "different moving pieces" from the start.

"Once we got started, we were off to the races," he said. "The deal reinforced for me how great it is to work at the firm. ... We all really work well together even though there are many demands on our time."

When the massive transaction was complete, he was able to share a "little moment" of celebration with his wife to mark the proud moment, he told Law360.

"On my way back after the transaction closed, I sent a text to my wife with a Bellagio fountains GIF to tell her," Quarfordt said.

### ***HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR:***

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unique challenges in Quarfordt's work, but he said this change was just part of the "ebbs and flows for deals in real estate."

"There were a host of issues that popped up due to the pandemic, like differing interpretations of certain contract provisions," he said, adding that his and his colleagues' ability to constantly keep in touch despite working remotely has facilitated them sharing what they've learned while navigating unprecedented times.

"Separately, with some decrease in deal flow, we have had more opportunities to devote time to pro bono — it's a different type of professional challenge working with small business clinics," he said,



referring to Zoom sessions he's had with small business owners to help them navigate the government's Paycheck Protection Program or landlord-tenant issues.

"It's good that we were able to provide assistance, as there were no easy answers to any of this," he said.

#### ***WHY HE'S A REAL ESTATE ATTORNEY:***

Quarfordt traced his affinity for real estate back to his childhood, recalling how he was able to physically see the buildings his grandfather had worked on as a carpenter and say, "That's grandpa's building."

"I'm attracted to things that live in the world," he said. "I've always gotten a kick out of seeing different hotels and shopping centers — even if it's small, or in a big city like Vegas."

#### ***WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:***

Quarfordt told Law360 that his motivations have changed the longer he's worked as a real estate attorney. In years past, he said, his drive would be trying to get a "deal done start to finish" — but his motivations have since taken a broader horizon.

"Now it's more, what's the impact? How can I be a better adviser to a client? How can I be a better mentor? I just like being a part of that process," he said. "I've been blessed to have good mentors, and that's what I want to do now."

#### ***HIS ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:***

The type of work that junior attorneys do at the start of their careers is not unlike the type of "training" work featured in the 1984 film "The Karate Kid," according to Quarfordt.

"I'm a child of the '80s, so I love 'The Karate Kid' movie. For me, it's the scene where Daniel is being taught how to sand the floor and wash the car. When you're doing diligence or reviewing contracts, you're essentially doing 'wax on, wax off,'" he said, referencing a character's instructions to his pupil, Daniel, while he is teaching him karate.

"The work that you do is part of your training, ... so when you get to a certain point after 'wax on, wax off,' you can defend punches and kicks," he said. "All of the work that you do all leads to you becoming a better lawyer."

— *As told to Julia Arciga.*

*Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2020 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.*