

Preserving and Enhancing Value

An Interview with Lisa K. Bevacqua,
Vice President-Asset Management, Silverstein Properties, Inc.

EDITORS' NOTE Lisa Bevacqua joined Silverstein Properties, Inc. in 2010 and is currently Vice President and Director of Asset Management, overseeing the firm's 10-million-square-foot portfolio of office and multi-family properties. Earlier, she worked in acquisitions and asset management at Citi Property Investors (CPI). Prior to that, she was a leasing broker at CB Richard Ellis/Whittier Partners in Boston. Bevacqua began her career as a consultant at Accenture. She earned an M.B.A. from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. from Boston College.



Lisa K. Bevacqua

COMPANY BRIEF Silverstein Properties, Inc. (silversteinproperties.com), is a full service real estate development and investment firm that has developed, owned, and managed 35 million square feet of office, residential, hotel, and retail space. The firm, based in Manhattan, has \$10-billion worth of development activity in the pipeline, including rebuilding the World Trade Center.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Silverstein Properties and what made you think it would be the right fit?

It was the name and the reputation of Larry Silverstein. I heard him speak when I was in business school and it left a lasting impression on me.

Everything about Silverstein Properties was exciting: the opportunity to work at his company and on large-scale New York-based real estate projects. My role is focused on office and multifamily operating assets, but the exposure to all of the development going on has also been exciting.

Everyone I have met is really fantastic. There are people that have been at Silverstein for more than 30 years, which is a testament to the loyalty that exists here.

Has the main focus for the firm been Lower Manhattan?

It's a huge part of it, but there is also development that we're doing on the West Side. We have two existing residential towers there – River Place and Silver Towers – that are in what is now becoming a hot new neighborhood.

River Place was completed 13 years ago and Silver Towers five years ago. It's amazing to see the transformation of that neighborhood,

working on those assets just a few years ago versus today, with all of the competition that now exists and is under construction.

In addition, we own and manage stabilized office assets throughout Midtown and Downtown, like 120 Broadway (1.9 million square feet), 120 Wall Street (650,000 square feet), and 1177 Avenue of the Americas (one million square feet), which I'm fortunate to also work on.

How strong is the office market today? Is there a vacancy number that generally determines the strength of the market?

We have our own in-house leasing team at Silverstein and it's pretty interesting. I'm a bit skewed when hearing stats that are released to the market because our operating portfolio is over 97 percent occupied, so we're at about a 3 percent vacancy rate now – this means we're exceeding the market. Our in-house leasing team is excellent.

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There is a heavy emphasis here on work/life balance.

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Are you surprised by all that is being created in Lower Manhattan?

It's so exciting to think about what it will be in another five years with so much additional office space, all the retail and even the luxury condominiums and hotels – like the Four Seasons that we are building a block from the World Trade Center site. The magnitude of it all and the transformation that is occurring is impressive.

We have a building on Wall Street and, over the past five years, the changes on Wall Street have been remarkable. The retail that came in and the residential conversions that are

happening there, let alone with the Trade Center site and everything happening around that, makes it all very exciting.

This sounds silly but when I first started working here, there weren't even many places nearby to get a sandwich for lunch. It's incredible that, just four years later, there is now so much available, and there is still so much more that will be coming online.

How do you maintain the family feel throughout the firm when it has grown to such size and scale?

Mr. Silverstein still walks around and knows everyone's name. Marty (Burger, CEO) is also an amazing person to work with.

Marty has brought in more of an institutional mindset. We've been expanding our investor base to continue to build upon our institutional relationships. This has brought a different element to the mix but, at the same time, there is still a strong entrepreneurial component to our culture. It's a terrific balance.

There is a heavy emphasis here on work/life balance and volunteerism. For instance, there are days when you can bring your kids to work. A lot of people appreciate being able to manage work/life and it keeps the family feel of the culture alive.

How do you define your role?

My job is to preserve and enhance the value of our operating portfolio and existing assets. This can mean many different things depending on the day, the market, the asset, the partner, or the loan that we have, or any number of other factors.

There is an element of flexibility that has to be present at all times. I can plan and organize as much as I want and, inevitably, I'm going to get derailed during the day. I make sure I'm organized no matter what so I know what I need to get done, while still being able to roll with the punches and reprioritize.

Much of what we do on the asset management side involves working with many of the other departments here, as well as with all of our capital partners. This is great because we get to collaborate with so many different people. The challenge is that we have to be extremely proactive and forward-thinking when it comes to managing all of the different drivers that impact a given asset at any one time. Keeping the plan moving and keeping people motivated to work together to complete what we're trying to accomplish is really challenging, yet extremely rewarding. ●