

Delivering Best-In-Class Experiences

An Interview with Laura Vulaj, Senior Vice President, Hospitality and Sustainability, SL Green Realty Corp.

EDITORS' NOTE *Laura Vulaj joined SL Green in 2012 and serves as Senior Vice President of Hospitality & Sustainability. In her hospitality role, Vulaj leads the strategy and execution of elevated tenant experiences across SL Green's portfolio, redefining the office environment through best-in-class service, design, and programming. She has overseen the development and launch of premium tenant amenity spaces focused on food and beverage, events, and conferencing, while curating exceptional services that enhance daily workplace experiences. Vulaj also directs the food and beverage, retail, and photo experience at SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, SL Green's iconic immersive observation deck in New York City. Vulaj manages SL Green's Sustainability program and ESG initiatives, guiding the company's long-term environmental strategy. With a proven track record of implementing impactful sustainability initiatives, she is committed to advancing SL Green's real estate practices as a model for responsible development and environmental stewardship. In 2020, Vulaj organized and led operations for the launch of FOOD1st, a charitable initiative established by SL Green in partnership with Chef Daniel Boulud. FOOD1st delivered meals to emergency workers and food-insecure New Yorkers while reactivating restaurant kitchens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vulaj serves on the board of the Urban Green Council and is a member of RENY's Sustainability Committee. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from Northeastern University.*



Laura Vulaj

for any career path. At the same time, I was always drawn to operations and the complexity that comes with it. Being successful in operations requires organization, clarity, and an understanding of how each task contributes to larger objectives. When the opportunity at SL Green came up in 2012, it was a bit of a leap of faith. Early in your career, you're still discovering what you want. But I took that leap and had the fortune of finding a great mentor in our Chief Operating Officer, Ed Piccinich. The majority of

my career has been at SL Green, where my early roles in operations and construction taught me the fundamentals of the business. In 2018, I took over Sustainability, and in 2020 my role expanded to include Hospitality, a program I had the opportunity to build from the ground up.

How do you describe SL Green's culture and values?

SL Green's culture is disciplined and competitive. We have a belief that every detail counts. We're always looking for ways to improve, innovate, and stay ahead of the curve. And at the core of our values is a real commitment to New York City and its people, its future, and its success.

Will you highlight your role and areas of focus?

My role primarily involves shaping and executing SL Green's strategy in sustainability and in hospitality. I oversee the company's ESG efforts and am responsible for reporting, compliance, energy management, emissions reduction, stakeholder engagement, and everything that falls under the umbrella of sustainability. On the hospitality side, I oversee our portfolio amenities including conference centers, cafes, event spaces, and fitness centers. I work closely



One Vanderbilt

Will you discuss your career journey?

I studied economics at Northeastern University because I was genuinely interested in the subject and saw it as a strong foundation

with our food and beverage and fitness operators and our in-house development, leasing, and marketing teams to ensure that our buildings deliver best-in-class experiences. I've also had the opportunity to partner with Chef Daniel Boulud and The Dinex Group to bring some of New York City's best restaurants and event spaces to life, including Le Pavillon, Jōji, La Tête d'Or, Le Jardin, and SUMMIT Events.

How do you balance the dual focuses of hospitality and sustainability?

It might sound like a cliché answer, but for me it all comes down to constant prioritizing and reprioritizing. Planning is crucial to success, but so is expecting the unexpected. You have to know your long-term goals, whether that's launching a new amenity center or developing a decarbonization strategy, and then reverse-engineer the path to get there. I always joke that hospitality and sustainability operate on two completely different brains, and switching between them can be challenging. I'm a big believer in hands-on leadership so I like to get in the weeds because it helps me shift more easily. I also feel that when you take the time to understand your team's processes, their challenges, and their day-to-day realities, you make better decisions and earn their trust.

How do you engage tenants and other stakeholders to align with SL Green's sustainability goals?

The key to driving sustainability initiatives with tenants and stakeholders is understanding what matters most to them. It's not always easy because each group has its own priorities, expectations, and resources. Interest in sustainability has grown, but the level and type of engagement vary widely. Some tenants have dedicated sustainability teams and ambitious goals and are eager to collaborate, but others are stretched thin and mainly need streamlined access to environmental data for reporting. Investors and JV partners look for transparency, performance, and evidence that sustainability drives value. Many have their own ESG frameworks, climate commitments, or reporting requirements, so our role is to align with those expectations while clearly communicating our strategy, progress, and impact. We focus on creating engagement opportunities that are accessible and meaningful. For tenants, these can be workshops, trainings, or one-on-one outreach. For investors and partners, it's transparent reporting and data-driven updates.

What was the vision for developing SL Green's hospitality program, and how is it enhancing the workplace experience?

Our vision was to redefine what a commercial building can offer by bringing in the hospitality principles you typically find in hotels and lifestyle environments. We wanted to create spaces and experiences that genuinely make employees look forward to coming to the office. Tenants today expect conferencing, social and event spaces, fitness offerings, and elevated food and beverage, so our vision was to deliver all of that at a best-in-class level.

Will you provide an overview of SL Green's amenity spaces and focus on food and beverage and wellness offerings?



SUMMIT One Vanderbilt

Our amenity spaces truly raise the bar. Beyond being thoughtfully and beautifully designed, they're paired with exceptional food and beverage offerings and the personal touch of the SL Green hospitality team. The program began with The Vandy Club at One Vanderbilt, featuring a café, a state-of-the-art auditorium, and a stunning outdoor terrace overlooking Grand Central. Since then, we've continued to grow and we opened a full-service fitness center at 450 Park with studios, treatment rooms, and even golf and racing simulators. We introduced Le Jardin sur Madison at One Madison Avenue, which is a remarkable rooftop that serves as a tenant amenity by day and transforms into an event space at night. Standing on that roof, you truly feel immersed in the city. Most recently, we opened an outstanding amenity at 245 Park Avenue which includes a café, a lounge that can be booked after hours for private events, and a fitness center that rivals some of the best gyms in New York City. All of our food and beverage is delivered in partnership with Chef Daniel Boulud and The Dinex Group, who recently launched Cuisine Boulud to elevate the catering experience across the city. There's so much more on the horizon, and it's incredibly exciting to be part of this expanding program.

What have been the keys to the impact and success of SUMMIT?

SUMMIT is something you truly must experience because reading about it can't capture what it feels like to be there. When we opened in October 2021, its impact was immediate. From day one, the success of SUMMIT reflected SL Green's focus on detail. It's a true expression of our hospitality vision because it blends an amazing design, efficient operations, and a memorable visitor experience. As part of my

role, I oversee the third-party operations for SUMMIT, so I've been deeply involved in the business from the beginning. Seeing how it has resonated with guests has been incredibly rewarding.

What are your priorities for SL Green's sustainability and hospitality efforts moving forward?

As I mentioned before, priorities shift, but at the moment we are focused on advancing our decarbonization efforts and implementing technologies that will continue to improve building performance. On the hospitality side, we have a few exciting projects in the pipeline including a rooftop amenity at 245 Park Avenue. We're also focused on expanding our event business at Le Jardin and SUMMIT Events.

What has made working at SL Green so special for you?

SL Green has shaped my professional and personal growth in ways I never could have imagined. In my 13+ years here, I've been given countless opportunities to adapt and take on new responsibilities, so much so that my role has constantly evolved. I've been tossed into projects where I had to learn everything from scratch, and that's where I thrive. Hand me a challenge and I feel energized. I love rolling up my sleeves, digging in, and figuring it out piece by piece, and SL Green has always encouraged that drive. I also genuinely appreciate how much the company values long-tenured employees. Retention is part of our culture and I'm proud to be a testament to that commitment. On top of that, the company's vision is truly inspiring. I love that our CEO, Marc Holliday, charges straight at initiatives that others might consider impossible. That mindset fuels all of us. We're willing to put in the time and the work to see the vision come to life. ●