

Morgan Lewis Adds 2 Data Center Pros From Perkins Coie

By **Madison Arnold**

Law360 (March 10, 2026, 4:12 PM EDT) -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP announced Tuesday that it added two new partners to its national real estate platform from Perkins Coie LLP.

Nathan Fahrer joined the firm in Seattle while Valerie Johnston works from Chicago. Their addition helps bolster Morgan Lewis' capabilities in data center development, investment and operations.

In their work, the duo handles sophisticated real estate transactions involving the acquisition, development, financing and operations across asset classes. They have particular expertise in the data center sector, the firm said.

"Across traditional real estate and the rapidly evolving data center space, clients are navigating capital markets volatility, supply constraints, complex leasing dynamics, and escalating infrastructure demands," said firm chair Jami McKeon, in a statement. "Nathan and Val bring a powerful combination of transactional depth, market insight, and industry fluency that supports clients as they move decisively in this environment, whether executing core real estate strategies or implementing mission-critical data center projects."

Fahrer advises clients on buying, selling, financing, developing and leasing real estate property across the country. He has played a role in major data center acquisitions, developments and leases, including colocation arrangements.

In his new role, Fahrer will work with the firm's power, finance and telecommunications teams to help with complex infrastructure, energy and connectivity issues in large-scale data center projects.

Additionally, Fahrer represents commercial landlords and tenants in office, retail and industrial leasing, including in confidential ground leasing matters, and counsels high-growth technology and internet clients on nationwide commercial leases, Morgan Lewis said.

He has also worked with commercial mortgage-backed securities, or CMBS, special servicers on real property-secured loan workouts and real estate-owned dispositions, and he handled real estate-related bankruptcy matters.



Nathan Fahrer



Valerie Johnston

"Across the national real estate market, we are seeing sustained demand for complex leasing — office, retail, and industrial — paired with heightened activity in data center development and colocation as technology and high-growth internet companies expand capacity," Fahrer said in a statement to Law360 Pulse on Tuesday. He added, "What excites me about Morgan Lewis is the fully integrated, collaborative real estate platform and the firm's strategic commitment to data centers, which aligns directly with my focus and gives clients true national and global coverage."

Fahrer is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School and holds a master's of business administration from the University of Pennsylvania, according to his biography on the firm's website. His bachelor's degree comes from Washington State University.

Johnston counsels clients on commercial real estate with a focus on the acquisition, disposition, development and financing of both vacant and developed assets.

Her abilities include structuring and negotiating management agreements, purchase agreements, loan documents, leases and lease amendments, colocation agreements and construction contracts across different asset classes. She has a focus on data centers and hotels.

Johnston also offers general business advice to developers, connects clients with project and capital opportunities and has worked on CMBS leasing and special financing options from both the borrower and lender side.

"Nationally, we are seeing a continued push to deliver data center capacity and to structure development pipelines efficiently, informed by complex facility contracts for major technology clients and supported by creative capital stacks," Johnston said in a statement to Law360 Pulse on Tuesday. She added, "The firm's collaborative model and focus on data center growth create immediate synergies for development and construction work and enable seamless service across the full spectrum of commercial real estate needs for existing and new clients."

A graduate of Marquette University Law School, Johnston holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, according to her firm biography.

"Nathan's experience guiding complex real estate and data center projects, together with Val's strengths in development, construction, and specialty financing, enhances our ability to deliver fully integrated real estate solutions and support clients across the full lifecycle of data center projects nationwide," said Christina Melendi, leader of the firm's corporate and business transactions practice.

She added, "Their shared client relationships and collaborative approach further strengthen our data center and broader real estate offerings across key markets, including Chicago, Seattle, and Northern California."

Morgan Lewis offers legal services across North America, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East and is home to more than 2,200 lawyers and specialists.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.
