

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO REAL ESTATE CHALLENGES

In the past 35 years as a real estate attorney, William Kramer has seen the ups and downs of the South Florida market cycle. When business is good, he helps lenders, developers, owners and investors put their deals together. During a downturn, he finds creative strategies to minimize clients' losses.

"After the market collapsed in 2008-09, I helped lenders sell off their bad Florida loans, in many cases as an alternative to foreclosing on the properties," says Kramer, a board-certified real estate specialist and a partner in Brinkley Morgan's Boca Raton and Fort Lauderdale offices. "The key was to convince multiple parties to take a creative and reasonable approach to a very challenging situation, and many of my clients were able to move bad loans off the books without protracted litigation."

Today, Kramer is seeing an upturn in lending in both the commercial and residential markets. "I work with investors who are buying and selling properties, as well as their lenders," he says. "It's definitely different from the reckless abandon some lenders showed in the mid 2000s, and it seems to be working. Partly due to more stringent regulatory requirements and primarily due to a more cautious approach, there are not a lot of bad loans out there now."

On the residential side, Kramer urges buyers and lenders to be patient with new federal regulations, particularly the "Know Before You Owe TILA-RESPA Integrated Disclosure (TRID) changes to the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA) that went into effect in October. "Don't get discouraged when you get that initial settlement cost estimate," he says. "Under the new rules, good faith estimates tend to be higher, rather than lower. It can also be very helpful for buyers to obtain legal counsel before making an offer, in order to be sure the contract covers potential problems that might occur with the new rules."

CHOOSING LAW OVER ACCOUNTING

Kramer grew up in North Miami Beach, and was a member of the first graduating class of North Miami Beach Senior High School in 1973. He earned his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Florida. After graduating, he passed the CPA exam the same year. "I had already decided I wanted to go to law school, but wanted to be able to have accounting as an alternate career path," he says. "Being able to understand a financial statement has certainly been helpful to me as a

business attorney."

As a student at Stetson University College of Law, Kramer worked for Peat Marwick and Mitchell, one of the "Big Eight" accounting firms, and was a summer intern with the chief counsel's office of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in Miami.

"After law school, I had offers from PMM and other firms to become an accountant, but I wanted to give my legal practice a chance, and 35 years later, I'm still practicing law," he says. "I am the first lawyer in the family, although my younger brother and sister became accountants."

Kramer and his wife Alice have a daughter Julie, who is a web developer for M.D. Live, and a son Matthew, an attorney who is joining Brinkley Morgan in January. "He's been practicing for several years doing bankruptcy and foreclosure defense, and will be moving into real estate transactional work." Kramer says.

In his free time, Kramer plays tennis and golf, and runs regularly. He's completed two marathons in under 4 hours and a dozen half-marathons. "I'm extremely competitive," he adds. "I know at age 60 I may not be first, but I always want to finish close to the top."

BUILDING A BOCA-BASED PRACTICE

Kramer started his career with Gunster in the firm's West Palm Beach office and moved to Boca Raton in the early 1980s where he helped open the firm's Boca Raton office. "I was doing real estate and corporate work at that point, and the Boca market was really starting to take off," he says. In the mid-'90s he joined Abrams Anton, where he headed its Boca office and built a diversified real estate practice, before the firm merged in 2005 with Greenspoon Marder.

In 2012, Kramer joined Brinkley Morgan to help open its Boca office and now works out of the Fort Lauderdale office as well. Brinkley is a 20-lawyer full service firm with emphasis on real estate, business and tax transactions, and civil litigation and is well known for its family law practice. "It gives me a great platform for serving clients throughout South Florida," says Kramer, who represents banks and other lenders, investors, developers, builders, buyers and sellers, and landlords and tenants in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties. He also serves as counsel to large and small closely held businesses and health care practices.



“Bill has represented us on Florida closings, loan collections and other legal matters,” says Rod Trzcinski, first vice president, Israel Discount Bank of New York in Miami. “Bill always handles things very professionally. Some attorneys want to ‘win’ a transaction, rather than put the deal together. Bill is able to maintain his pleasant, even temperament even in emotionally charged situations.”

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Whether working with the Realtor Association of Greater Fort Lauderdale, lecturing at legal conferences and seminars, or staying active in The Florida Bar, Kramer is a respected leader in professional legal circles. Currently, he is vice chair of The Florida Bar’s Real Estate

Certification Committee, which writes the exams and reviews the qualifications of attorneys seeking board certification. “There are about 10,000 real estate attorneys in Florida, but only about 500 who are board certified,” he says. “That number has remained fairly constant, as new attorneys replace older specialists who retire.”

Kramer has also served as chair of the South Palm Beach County Bar Association’s Real Estate Committee, The Florida Bar’s Boca Raton Area Grievance Committee, the Palm Beach County Bar Association’s Liaison Committee with CPAs, and the City of Parkland Code Enforcement Board.

In the community, Kramer is a longtime advocate for SOS Children’s Villages – Florida, a residential group foster home in

the Coconut Creek area, housing up to 78 children. “We try to keep siblings together as much as possible,” he adds. Since only half of the organization’s rather significant budget comes from the state, Kramer is an active fundraiser in the private sector.

“Bill’s passion and commitment to the unique needs of kids in the foster care system is evident in his every interaction in our organization,” says Keith DuVernay, executive director and CEO. “We are delighted that Bill will be serving as the chairman of our board in 2017. He is a real advocate and champion for our work.”

Looking to the future, Kramer says he wants to continue to handle intellectually stimulating matters for clients who need his professional guidance: “To me, that’s what being a lawyer is all about.”