

Shaping New York City

An Interview with Harrison Sitomer, Chief Investment Officer, SL Green

EDITORS' NOTE Harrison Sitomer serves as SL Green's Chief Investment Officer, overseeing the company's investment platform. Sitomer is responsible for sourcing and executing the company's acquisitions, dispositions, financings, and joint ventures, along with debt and preferred equity investments. Sitomer also manages the Food1st Foundation, a 501(c)3 established by SL Green, which has purchased and delivered nearly 1,000,000 free meals throughout New York City since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to serve a dual mission of addressing increased demand for food assistance, while also helping to revitalize New York City's food and beverage industry by reactivating more than 35 kitchens. Sitomer serves on the Board of Directors of the American Friends of the Rabin Medical Center and is a member of the David Rockefeller Fellowship Program and the Milken Institute Young Leaders Circle. Sitomer received a BA degree from the University of Pennsylvania.



Harrison Sitomer

company and our city – and probably the fact that we are all in the office together every single day of the week – causes us to be more like family than colleagues.

Whether it is someone in construction, operations, leasing, investments – we are all working as one team to get stuff done.

What have been the keys to SL Green's leadership in the industry?

Two of the keys to the company's leadership in the industry are our continuity and sticking to what we

know.

With respect to continuity: Across all of our disciplines, there is significant tenure and leadership that has seen it all. Every type of market, every type of issue has been encountered. And that leadership team has made it a priority to share these experiences with the next generation of the organization. For example, Marc Holliday, our Chairman and CEO, has led the company for over 26 years and maintains discipline for the organization, and I personally have benefited from his mentorship.

With respect to sticking to what we know: Many of our competitors are in 5, 10 or even 15 geographic markets and rely heavily on third parties, market reports, etc. In comparison, we stick to New York, a market that we know. For example, if I want to know the exact rent for a building I can go to Steve Durels, Head of Leasing, and if I want to know the cost to build out a space, I can go to Bob Dewitt, Head of Construction, and because of that we have a competitive advantage in our decision-making and our underwriting. For me, this makes my job much easier than investment managers that have the burden of relying on third parties local to a market – we can rely on our internal teams that have first-hand information and accountability, and we can make decisions with better information than anyone else.

What are your views on the state of the New York real estate market and how is SL Green positioned for success even with the headwinds facing the office sector?

We made a very concerted effort over the past few years to dispose of non-core assets and significantly enhance and improve the portfolio. So, the good news is that the portfolio is high

COMPANY BRIEF SL Green Realty Corp. (slgreen.com), Manhattan's largest office landlord, is a fully integrated real estate investment trust, or REIT, that is focused primarily on acquiring, managing and maximizing value of Manhattan commercial properties. As of June 30, 2023, SL Green held interests in 60 buildings totaling 33.1 million square feet. This included ownership interests in 28.8 million square feet of Manhattan buildings and 3.4 million square feet securing debt and preferred equity investments.

Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

As Chief Investment Officer of SL Green, I oversee the Company's investment platform and am responsible for SL Green's investment and capital markets business – acquisitions, dispositions, refinancing, recapitalization, and direct lending.

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

Simply put, SL Green is made up of committed, die-hard New Yorkers. Everything we do is focused on not only enhancing the company, but also the city we operate in. This collective sense of mission to better the



One Vanderbilt



760 Madison Avenue, an SL Green ultra-luxury residential condominium project in partnership with Giorgio Armani (above and below)

quality and as a result it is performing well – leasing, operations, and capital metrics are all at market leading levels. The more macro focus, not specific to New York or the commercial real estate business, is the disruption in capital markets. I am hopeful we will see a pickup in that activity once there is a clearer direction from the Fed. For SL Green, more specifically, we have great relationships with our partners and lenders – they have a lot of faith in us to execute on business plans, and they are patient, long-term thinkers like we are. Further, given our relationships, we are well-positioned to be opportunistic in this market and take advantage of the market dislocation.

Will you discuss SL Green’s current development projects?

Among all of our development projects, I am most excited about 760 Madison Avenue. We are developing an ultra-luxury, exclusive residential condominium project in partnership with Giorgio Armani, which will be known as the Giorgio Armani Residences. It’s a really special project, with only ten residences – including one that will belong to Mr. Armani – situated atop what will be Armani’s new Manhattan flagship at the corner of East 65th Street. We’re on track to complete construction next summer.

What do you see as SL Green’s responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves?

SL Green is a New York company. It is not only where we work and where we invest, but it is also our home. And because of that, we care deeply about New York, and we work tirelessly to see the city succeed as it has a tangible impact on our everyday life. There are very few companies where you have the opportunity to work on projects that you, your family and friends all get to enjoy. Whether it is helping open a new 10-seat Michelin Starred

sushi restaurant in Grand Central called Joji, constructing buildings where your neighbors work every day, or developing a global attraction like SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, the projects that SL Green creates will help shape New York City and all of us take enormous pride in what we do every day.



You manage Food1st Foundation, which was founded by SL Green. What was the vision for creating Food1st and will you discuss the impact of the Foundation?

Marc Holliday, Jelena Kero, Daniel Boulud, and I launched this initiative together in 2020. The vision was simple – we were sitting in our office in April 2020 seeing the devastation

COVID-19 was having on our City every day, and the idea came up to find a way to support restaurants that were otherwise going out of business due to the pandemic, while at the same time helping feed those that required food assistance. The need was endless. We reached out to some of our partners, lenders, and tenants to help us raise funds and we got to work. Everything was done completely in-house – restaurant activation, food distribution, fund-raising – all while trying to keep the business running during a very difficult period. Food1st is still going, with 1 million meals and dozens of restaurants supported. We are very proud of this initiative, and it continues to demonstrate our commitment to New York City.

How do you describe your leadership style?

In many ways, I look at the team as an extension of my family. I put a lot of trust and faith in them and do everything I can to support them, and I expect the same in return. We all spend a lot of time together, so it is critical that we not only work well together, but that we enjoy doing it as well.

You started as an intern at SL Green and now serve as Chief Investment Officer. What has the journey been like for you?

The journey has been pretty surreal. I joined SL Green with absolutely no real estate background or experience – in fact, I barely got through the interview process. And to get to this point has required a lot of hard work, dedication, great mentors, and is a result of SL Green’s focus on investing in young talent and creating an opportunity for the younger generation of leaders to grow and climb the ladder quickly.

I am hoping this journey is still just getting started.

With the impact that you have made at SL Green and the many deals that you have led, are you able to enjoy the process and take moments to celebrate the wins?

We certainly try. We have developed traditions that we try to uphold when we close transactions. It gives us the opportunity to slow down for a second and appreciate all of the hard work that goes into each deal. And then get back to work the next morning.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Most business is based on relationships and shared experience. And the easiest way to build those relationships is to get to the office five days a week. The experience I get from being in the office every day, going to events at night, meeting people for breakfast, lunch and dinner – those types of relationships are career accelerants and will play a significant role in anyone’s growth at any stage in a career.

Beyond that, I am a big believer in establishing strong mentors both for professional and personal growth. People that you can look up to and that can set benchmarks for what you want to achieve in your life. I have been fortunate to have multiple mentors at SL Green who have been beacons for me and have also been incredible sounding boards when things inevitably don’t go as planned. ●