

A Trusted Partner

An Interview with Jason Barnett, Vice Chairman, Chief Legal Officer, and Chief Administrative Officer, RXR

EDITORS' NOTE Jason Barnett is one of the founding managing partners of RXR where he serves as Vice Chairman, Chief Legal Officer, and Chief Administrative Officer. RXR is a fully integrated, multi-billion-dollar private real estate company which was formed following the sale of Reckson Associates Realty Corp to SL Green, one of the largest public real estate management buyouts in REIT history. Prior to the Reckson/SL Green merger, Barnett served as Senior Executive Vice President – Corporate Initiatives, General Counsel, and Secretary of Reckson. During his tenure at Reckson and RXR, Barnett has played a key role in over \$37 billion worth of transactions, transforming RXR into one of Manhattan's largest office landlords, as well as a leading owner, manager, and developer in the New York metropolitan region, and driving the company's continued national expansion. Prior to joining Reckson, Barnett practiced in the corporate and securities department of Sidley Austin Brown & Wood, LLP, an international law firm, where he focused on capital markets and Real Estate Investment Trusts. Barnett is a frequent speaker at industry conferences on such topics as transaction structures, joint ventures, real estate capital markets, corporate- and compliance-related matters. He is a member of the American Bar Association, National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts, the Real Estate Board of New York, and is admitted to the Bar of the State of New York. Barnett is an active participant in his community and serves as a Director, Trustee or Advisor for a number of community-based organizations. Barnett also serves on the Board of Trustees of Clark University, in Worcester, Massachusetts and as a member of the London School of Economics North American Advisory Board. Barnett earned a BA degree from Clark University, attended the London School of Economics, and earned his Juris Doctor from Emory University School of Law.



Jason Barnett

stakeholders. Headquartered in New York with a nationally-scaled platform, RXR is an approximately 450 person, vertically integrated investment manager with expertise in a wide array of value creation activities, including acquisitions, asset and portfolio management, property operations, development, construction, leasing, and technological innovation. RXR is an active investor in real estate credit, rental housing, commercial property, and property technology through value-added and opportunistic investment strategies. The RXR platform manages 105 commercial real estate properties and investments with an aggregate gross asset value of approximately \$18 billion, comprising approximately 30.5 million square feet of commercial properties, a multi-family residential portfolio of approximately 9,400 units under operation or development, and control of development rights for an additional approximately 3,000 multi-family and for sale units.

What have been the keys to RXR's industry leadership?

At RXR, our company's ethos is, "Doing Good and Doing Well means Doing Better."

We're proud of the strong reputation we have built over the years, and we take great pride in living by our word and doing what's right. We seek to create deals that are a win-win for all parties involved. We spend a great deal of time thinking about what is important to our counterparties, so that they can achieve what they want, while we achieve what we need in return. This not only helps in building trust, but also in establishing long-term relationships with our partners. Additionally, we have long believed that in our industry, standing still is moving backwards. We like to say that we, "regularly recalibrate reality," because, as we have learned, whether it's the Great Financial Crisis of 2008, the COVID-19 pandemic, or the high interest rate and high inflationary environment that we find ourselves in today, the playbooks of the past are never guaranteed to work in the future.

Finally, we have long believed that we are only as strong as the communities in which we operate. We take pride in building strong communities not just within our buildings, but in our surrounding communities. We view local hiring, supporting local businesses, community engagement, and giving back as an integral component to our business. We believe this is a key part of our success.

COMPANY BRIEF RXR (rxr.com) is an innovative real estate investment manager, operator, developer, and place-maker committed to applying a customer and community-centered approach to acquiring, operating, and building properties and to providing services and products that create enduring value for all



Veridea - a \$3 billion RXR development in Apex, North Carolina

Will you highlight RXR's growth and expansion into new markets?

RXR is a New York-based company, but when we were considering expanding outside of New York, we believed our experience and expertise not just in New York City, but throughout the broader New York metropolitan region, could be replicated in similar markets across the country. We can apply the lessons that we have learned in one of the most challenging markets in the country to successfully navigate in those areas in the country that we have identified as Superstar Regions.

We're very data driven. We have a formula that helps us identify those regions and places where the demographics and business environment will allow for us to be successful. We focus on markets with strong education systems, healthcare systems, and leadership that is supportive of growth and business – or what we commonly refer to as Eds, Meds, and Well-Led cities.



Will you discuss RXR's focus on not just creating buildings, but also creating communities?

We don't see ourselves as just a builder of assets; we see ourselves as a builder of communities. It is not just about the four walls – it is about the service and the hospitality and the programs that we incorporate into the building. We take the time to get to know our tenants and their businesses, and we see ourselves as a trusted partner. RXR was built on a philosophy of continually providing our customers with what they need to thrive.



1285 Avenue of the Americas in New York City (left); Clinton Park in New Rochelle, New York (above)

When we enter a new community, we spend a great deal of time meeting with as many different constituencies as possible to learn what they need and want so that we can incorporate these things into our development plans.

A good example is our role as master developer of downtown New Rochelle. Housing affordability is a major issue in New York City, and creating a new supply of housing in Manhattan is extremely difficult. We looked outside the city to areas that have good transit connectivity, and a walkable downtown that can be revitalized to deliver the kind of live/work/play environment that young talent is attracted to. New Rochelle is a 30-minute commute to Manhattan, it has the infrastructure and transportation, but it did not have the capability to build housing at scale in the way that people want. In 2015, we constructed a public/private partnership with the municipality, and we helped them rewrite their zoning code to induce smart growth in terms of responsible but efficient development to revitalize their downtown. This allowed them to retain their local talent while also providing a housing solution for talent priced out of New York City. We engaged the local community, and supported the local businesses and schools, which comes back to RXR's culture and values of being a partner to the communities where we operate.

How do you focus your efforts as one of the founding partners of RXR, and what has made the relationship between the founders work so well?

Much of my day-to-day focus is on leading our legal function, and transactional execution, and working with my partners in dealing with strategic matters and certain elements of management. I have a very strong team and the exciting part of the legal function is that it touches all parts of the business.

The relationship between our founders is built on respect and trust. We started working

together when we were young, and we have faced many challenges over the years. These moments together have made us stronger, and we have always put the value of the partnership above any one issue. While we are all very different and come from different backgrounds, we listen to each other and respect each other's opinions. Any time we have a serious issue to address, we sit around a table together and talk it through to come up with the best solution. We all believe deeply in the mission and purpose of RXR. It also helps that we truly like each other, we enjoy each other's company, and are passionate about building our business.

What are your views on the future of work and the importance of employees being in an office to build culture and collaborate?

There is clearly an aspect of remote work that is here to stay and has a role, but I believe it is much smaller than people think. There is no substitute for sitting around a table and looking each other in the eye. There are countless examples of the work that gets done when people are together and collaborating. You can't teach culture remotely. People need to be together, but they need to be together in environments that offer opportunities for greater levels of productivity and growth. For RXR, it is about delivering the highest quality space with hospitality and programming that employers need to attract, nurture, and retain talent.

What do you tell young people about the types of careers the real estate industry offers?

Real estate touches so many things, and there is not a day that goes by that you won't hear or read something in the headlines that involves real estate. It may be about interest rates, unemployment, mergers, global crises, labor disputes, local or national elections. Real estate is an amazing industry because every day is different. No matter how experienced you are, you're learning something new all the time. ●