

OJRNR covers lots of ground in real estate legal arena

BY DOUG MCPHERSON

SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

An old classmate of Tom Ragonetti's from law school teases him that his firm, Otten Johnson Robinson Neff + Ragonetti PC, is "a real estate department the size of a 1,000-person firm; you just don't have another 960 lawyers."

Of course, that's a compliment, and it's the way Ragonetti likes to begin describing the firm to those who ask about it.

To Ragonetti, the story gets to the heart of the firm's many abilities in real estate.

"We have bench strength with a lot of cross-disciplinary experience; we can go from soup to nuts," Ragonetti said. "It's what makes us unique, and it gives clients a level of sophistication and been-there-done-that kind of perspective that's very valuable to clients when they come along with another big deal."

Ragonetti said when Frank Robinson, Bruce Johnson, Bill Neff and he started the firm 27 years ago, real estate was the cornerstone.

"Frank and Bruce and I were all real estate attorneys and Bill was a corporate lawyer who did work for a lot of real estate clients. So real estate was our base," Ragonetti said. "Right from the beginning we had real estate, land use, condemnation, public private financing and partnership expertise. So we could take very complicated deals and do a lot more



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Clockwise from left, Otten Johnson Robinson Neff + Ragonetti's Michael Westover, Thomas Macdonald, John Sternberg, Thomas Ragonetti and Frank Robinson.

than just the real estate transactional part."

One example where the firm is displaying its breadth of services in real estate,

**OTTEN JOHNSON ROBINSON
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Band 1: Real Estate

Ragonetti said, is the redevelopment of the old University of Colorado Hospital medical center.

"It calls upon a lot of our real estate skills: our acquisition skills, leasing skills, land-use and entitlement skills, our expertise in redevelopment because it will be an urban-renewal deal as well," Ragonetti said. "... it's a very complicated entitlement project and it'll take five or six of our lawyers."

Besides a depth of offerings, Ragonetti said another plus at the firm is customer service.

"Law is a service business. You've got to be enormously attentive to delivering the service to your clients in a form they want and in way that they're happy to pay for," he said.

"To me, law is still a profession ... it's a business. There's an element of pride you take in your professional expertise that goes above and beyond whatever you make in the way of an income, and we all feel that way."

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