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PERSPECTIVE

Hanson Bridgett in growth mode, particularly in LA

By Christer Schmidt

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Hanson Bridgett LLP added 10 attorneys in the past 15 months to its Los Angeles office and the California firm itself grew as much as 15% in 2020 even as the pandemic began. Partners credit the boom to flexible remote and in-person work policies, a reputation for focusing on long-term clientele and a wide choice of practices for new hires to slot into.

The firm — with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento and Walnut Creek — has more than 200 attorneys in a diverse range of roles.

“In 2020 we actually grew 15%,” said Claire H. Collins, a partner who works in real estate and environmental law. “From a work standpoint, we were uninterrupted. We kind of saw the way the world was changing. Everybody being forced to come to an office everyday wasn’t part of our future.”

The Los Angeles office was founded in 2014 and now has 35 attorneys.

“A big part of my day is mentoring the young attorneys I brought on,” said Alfonso Estrada, a partner focused on labor and wage law. “We’ve grown a lot here in LA, and I don’t see that slowing down anytime soon.”

Partner Alex R. Baghdassarian, who works in construction law, recently joined the firm after handling a project in which his clients were on the opposite side of those represented by Hanson Bridgett. “Hanson Bridgett represented the owner/developer and I represented the contractor, and we negotiated the construction contract for a high rise in downtown San Francisco.”

Then, “A couple of months ago, I was contacted by a recruiter informing me that Hanson Bridgett was interested in seeing if I



Alfonso Estrada, Raffi Zerounian, Alex Baghdassarian, Alex Grigoriens and Claire Collins stand for a portrait at their office in downtown Los Angeles on Aug. 31, 2022. Justin L. Stewart | Special to the Daily Journal

was willing to join their practice in Southern California,” said Baghdassarian. “They offer a great opportunity for me in terms of the depth of the bench that they have. It’s a very people-centric firm; we have a lot of respect for each other and our clients.”

Another recruiting team for the firm is clients.

“At some point one of my biggest clients, which is a bank client ... we chatted and then Hanson came up and she said, ‘Whoa, that’s a great firm, we do a lot of business with them,’” said Alex M. Grigoriens, a real estate attorney at the firm. “It seemed to fit with my practice, my culture, the way I like to run my firm. Everything just kind of seemed to align.”

The Los Angeles office, the second largest for the firm, was partially founded in 2014 by partner Raffi V. Zerounian, a trademark and copyright attorney whose wife, Anita G. Zerounian, is also a partner.

Estrada, who is more comfortable in the office than working from his couch, said, “We have some folks who never come into the office.” At the same time, “What’s unique about the culture in LA is that folks show up, folks want to be here. There’s always a full house everyday here. We’re actually looking for a bigger space.”

The firm prides itself on its diversity, including attorneys from a number of backgrounds legally and socially.

“Our partnership reflects what California looks like. I’m very proud of that,” said Zerounian.

“The firm has been around for over 60 years,” said Zerounian. “We have grown when it has strengthened the firm or benefited our clients. That’s what drives the modest and organic growth the office has had over the last number of decades. We take a long-term view of our clients and of each other. We don’t often lose partners to other firms. That changes how people treat one another. If you know you are going to be working with someone for a very long time, you treat them fairly.”

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