



*Eric West, Rich Lane, and Gary Schlager*

## **At a Pivotal Time in Commercial Real Estate, West, Lane & Schlager Realty Advisors Marks its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

### ***Tenant-only focus shapes real estate strategies for a post-pandemic workforce***

Washington, DC (April 12, 2021) – Amidst an unprecedented time in commercial real estate, West, Lane & Schlager Realty Advisors (WLS) is marking its 25th anniversary by taking an even more strategic role with the tenants they represent. In this post-pandemic era, they are not only helping tenants navigate a unique (and advantageous) real estate market, they are working with their clients to re-imagine the role of their workplace after a year of Zoom calls and heightened health priorities.

In 1996, the firm's founders, Eric West, Rich Lane, and Gary Schlager, created their company on a single clear idea: focus on tenant partnerships--not transactions. 25 years later, WLS still represents its very first client.

Over the past quarter century, they have guided companies through growth, numerous moves, and changing real estate markets. Early on in their formation, they decided to focus solely on tenants. "This was probably our most difficult decision as a young company since we had a fairly significant portfolio of building listings totaling about one million square feet which we gave up to pursue a tenant only platform," Rich Lane said. "We didn't want to spend our time chasing listings; we wanted to help companies optimize their real estate to support their missions. We wanted to help them grow."

"This philosophy takes on new meaning today," says Eric West. "Tenants need much more than a broker, they need a trusted partner. They are re-evaluating their operational strategies from top to bottom, rebuilding their cultures, re-thinking how remote work fits into the picture, considering social distancing as part of the work environment, and re-prioritizing their office space economics. These are big strategic issues."

"It's all about being good strategists. I have been through many real estate cycles over the years in Washington, and seen swings in office utilization, but this is much different," said Eric West. "The value of the "office" is being completely redefined. These are uncharted waters, but it's the place we really shine."

### **WLS's History Drove Culture and Growth**

Rich and Eric were close friends, initially meeting at Tulane University, then eventually sharing an apartment in DC after college and beginning their real estate careers at different firms. Although each achieved success in their respective careers, in 1996 they were ready for a change and decided to start their own company. Advice from Rich's father inspired the decision, "If you ever have the chance to be your own boss – take It!" In 1997, Gary, a previous coworker of Eric's, joined the firm. United by shared values and perspectives, the three saw an opportunity and took it.



“When we first got to know one another, long discussions about the most meaningful aspects of our work developed into a desire to spend more of our days doing the things that brought us the most satisfaction,” explained Eric West. “We each brought our own skills, relationships, and leadership styles to the new firm, determined to create a place where we could all thrive.” Gary Schlager added, “We got lucky, we found what we were best at and capitalized on each other’s strengths. Each focused on different aspects of the firm, such as marketing, personnel, systems, but we all worked, and continue to work, together as valued partners.”

From the outset, Rich, Eric, and Gary worked to cultivate a positive office environment centered on partnership and cooperation instead of competition and rivalry. “This business is competitive enough between companies, and we did not want to bring that inside our office as well,” Rich Lane commented. WLS began representing both landlord and tenants, but soon after launching made the business decision to focus solely on tenants. “We knew that specialization was the most effective way for an independent firm to thrive in this market.”

Their supportive company culture promotes teamwork, stimulates collaborative problem solving and results in “out of the box” ideas for their clients. As the firm has grown, the founders have invested in their team members through leadership development and internal promotions to expand their partnership. Consequently, WLS has been able to retain key team members and generate breadth of talent at every level in the firm. Every transaction, no matter how small, has direct involvement from at least one of the principals to ensure that every client has access to the firm’s full expertise.

### **About West, Lane & Schlager Realty Advisors**

Washington, D.C.-based West, Lane & Schlager Realty Advisors, LLC is a leading commercial real estate brokerage firm that exclusively represents tenants in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. Services provided by West, Lane & Schlager are tenant representation, investments, construction management, strategic planning, and operating-expense reviews. For more information on West, Lane & Schlager, please visit [www.wlsrealty.com](http://www.wlsrealty.com).

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