

## Structured Finance Group Of The Year: Cadwalader

By **Caleb Drickey**

*Law360 (February 18, 2022, 2:02 PM EST)* -- Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft LLP's team of securitization and structured finance attorneys guided Wells Fargo through the \$3 billion financing of Midtown Manhattan skyscraper One Vanderbilt and emerged as leaders in the sustainable finance space, netting it a spot among Law360's 2021 Structured Finance Groups of the Year.

Although the practice area falls under its capital markets umbrella, capital markets group co-chair Stuart Goldstein told Law360 that Cadwalader dedicates extraordinary resources — including a 150-strong team of attorneys that has 34 partners — to structured finance and securitization work. Those attorneys are spread across Cadwalader's offices in the U.S. and Europe, with significant presences in New York, London, D.C. and Charlotte, North Carolina.

"Culturally, securitization is in the DNA at Cadwalader," Goldstein said. "We were at the pioneering forefront of the transactions, and we've developed the largest practice in the world."

According to fellow capital markets group co-chair Michael Gambro, the practice group's institutional heft and reputation comes from a culture of humility and collaboration that has partners sharing client relationships rather than squabbling for credit.

"We basically share the institutional credit, so that we incentivize people to work collaboratively to strengthen and build relationships with clients," he said. "I think that that sort of collaboration is also something it trickles down to the special counsel and associates as well."

In 2021, that collaborative approach propelled Cadwalader's capital markets team to finalize a string of high-profile, often record-breaking debt securitization transactions.

In June, it advised Wells Fargo Bank NA, as lead lender in a nine-bank consortium, on a \$3 billion mortgage backed security-based financing for SL Green Realty Corp., the manager of One Vanderbilt Tower. That deal represented the largest ever single-property mortgage-backed security issuance.

The same month, Cadwalader attorneys represented Deutsche Bank in its role as arranger of a €400 million collateralized loan obligation transaction. Notably, the loans and bonds underlying that CLO are compliant with environmental, social and governance, or ESG, investing best practices, and must be



monitored by designated asset manager NIBC Bank NV to ensure that they remain compliant with ESG standards.

In October, Cadwalader represented Morgan Stanley in the issuance of \$579 million in mortgage-backed securities linked to multifamily properties that are either dedicated to affordable housing or have environmentally friendly designs. Those mortgaged-backed securities were among the first to be certified by Freddie Mac as "sustainability bonds."

Goldstein told Law360 that the firm's banner year in sustainable finance was no fluke. He credited its younger attorneys — particularly special counsel Michael Ruder — with identifying the inevitable broad investor interest in social responsibility and sustainability that would cross into the securitization and bond issuance market.

Beyond the firm's eye for identifying market trends, Gambro expressed pride that Cadwalader's structured finance practice had a hand in facilitating transactions he says provide a net social good.

"We are not the ones that are providing the credit," he said of his work on the Freddie Mac Sustainability Bonds program, "but we are very proud of our involvement with an important program that reduces the costs of credit to the people that need it, who need housing."

When asked what trends Cadwalader attorneys were tracking for 2022 and beyond, Goldstein identified fintech, specifically cryptocurrency, as a target for growth.

"One of the things that we're very focused on in the same way we talked about ESG is fintech. We've developed an internal working group across the firm, including folks from our structured finance group," he said. "If you see where the cryptocurrency market is right now, if you're not focusing on it, you're missing an opportunity."

Before looking to the future, Cadwalader's capital markets co-chairs took a moment to reflect on the award-winning year that was. Both Gambro and Goldstein marveled at their colleagues' tenacity and willingness to collaborate more closely than ever despite the disruptions of another year of pandemic.

"I'm so proud of our firm's ability to ... work collaboratively and get a significant amount of transactions done for clients. It was a super keen effort on the part of not only the attorneys and paralegals, but also the IT staff, the administrative staff that got us the tools that we need," Gambro said.

"It really is a team award," Goldstein agreed. "You know, it is quintessential when you say it's a [structured finance] group of the year, it just shows the effort that the entire group put in together to support each other."

--Editing by Adam LoBelia.