

# 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Illinois Financial Forecast Forum

## Speaker & Moderator Biographies

### *C. Kelly Cofer*

**Founder and CEO,  
The Retail Coach**

C. Kelly Cofer founded The Retail Coach more than 20 years ago and continues to blend his expertise in retail real estate and corporate site selection with his knowledge of economic and community development to assist more than 600 communities across the U.S. in reaching their retail potential. As a recognized expert in finance, market research and analysis, urban and suburban retail, property development and redevelopment, Kelly's over 35 years of experience in the retail real estate business are unmatched. The Retail Coach was born from Kelly's determination to see communities succeed and to give city leaders the knowledge and ability to recruit retail.

Kelly led the site selection for new stores and headed the rollout for national retail brands and restaurants as a commercial real estate broker in Dallas, Texas. His extensive experience includes national site selection in the corporate real estate department of a NYSE-traded national retailer leading market analysis and new market site selection.

Kelly attended the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma, holds a B.S. degree from Texas A&M University, and earned the prestigious Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) designation from the Chicago-based Commercial Investment Real Estate Institute.

### *Stephen B. Friedman*

**President,  
SB Friedman Development Advisors**

Stephen B. Friedman, FAICP, CRE – President is founder and president of SB Friedman Development Advisors, and brings over 40 years of experience in real estate and development advisory services. He is both a planner and real estate analyst, bringing a perspective on development sharpened by a concern for the creation of good communities (“place-making”) and the need for economic feasibility. Steve and his team focus on formulating redevelopment strategies and public-private partnerships for development using Tax Increment Financing, Business Districts, Special Service Areas, and New Markets Tax Credits for a wide range of projects. These include mixed-use projects, community facilities, downtown redevelopment, transit-oriented development, waterfronts, industrial expansions/revitalization and airport collateral development. Steve is registered with the SEC as a Municipal Advisor, and is a Counselor of Real Estate (CRE), a member of the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP), and a full member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), where he has served in District Council and national leadership positions. He is also a director of The Civic Federation and of Family Focus. In 2013, Steve received the James Felt Creative

Counseling Award of the Counselors of Real Estate for his development advisory role on The Shops and Residences of Uptown Park Ridge project. Steve holds a B.A. from Goddard College in Vermont and an M.S. in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

## *Benjamin Gehrt*

**Attorney,  
Clark Baird Smith**

Benjamin Gehrt is a Partner in the law firm Clark Baird Smith LLP, where he focuses his practice on traditional labor law and employment litigation. He has experience in grievance and interest arbitration cases, contract negotiations, and unfair labor practice charges. Ben also represents clients in EEO and wage-hour litigation.

Ben has represented public and private sector clients in contract negotiations and interest arbitration. In those settings, he has helped clients obtain significant cost savings through changes in staffing levels, wage schedules, retiree insurance benefits, sick leave buyback benefits, and work rule changes, among other things.

Additionally, Ben has developed a niche practice at Clark Baird Smith LLP, counseling the firm's clients on a wide variety of wage and hour issues under both state and federal law. In addition to handling the traditional wage payment questions that arise with private sector businesses, Ben is skilled at answering questions that are unique to the public sector, such as questions about compensatory time, 7(k) work periods, pay for canine handlers, and duty shift trades, to name a few.

Ben was selected to the 2016 Illinois Rising Stars list. Only 2.5 percent of all attorneys in the State of Illinois were selected.

## *Tammie Grossman*

**Director of Development Customer Services,  
Village of Oak Park**

Tammie Grossman, is Director of Development Customer Services at the Village of Oak Park. She has over 30 years of experience in federal and state housing programs. She served as legal services attorney for 15 years with Prairie State Legal Services. As managing attorney for one of Prairie State's nine offices, she supervised a staff of nine attorneys, two paralegals and three support staff. She has authored numerous web-based interactive legal education housing materials for attorneys and pro se litigants for Illinois Legal Aid Online. This experience led to a position as Executive Director for Housing Action Illinois. After joining the Village of Oak Park, she led the effort to redesign all Village housing programs funded with Community Development Block Grant funds and Village general revenue funds. In late 2013, she was selected to head up the newly created Development Customer Services Department, which oversees Planning, Business Services, Housing and Building Standards divisions. Under her direction, the Village implemented software solutions to automate the Village's

building and parking permitting, inspection and licensing activities, which has led to more than 90 percent of all activities now being conducted online.

## *Jason Horwitz*

**Director, Policy Development, Planning and Research,  
DCEO**

Jason Horwitz oversees Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DECO) Policy Development, Planning and Research bureau's efforts to identify and implement policies and new programs that accomplish Illinois' economic development goals. During his three years leading the policy team of the agency, DCEO has put in place and begun to implement a 5-year economic plan; provided over \$500 million in relief efforts to support small businesses and entrepreneurs during the pandemic; and deployed innovative new capital grant programs to build infrastructure, commercial development, and training facilities as part of the \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois capital plan. He also oversees research initiatives carried out by DCEO and our partners on the Illinois economy, the impact of economic development programs, and best practices for economic development.

Jason previously worked at Anderson Economic Group where he led the firm's public policy practice as the Director of Public Policy and Economic Analysis. In that role, Jason advised non-profits, governments, and corporate clients on public policy impacts and effective communication of those impacts in the fields of economic development, state and local taxes, pensions, and energy.

## *Mary Ludgin*

**Senior Managing Director and Head of Global Research,  
Heitman Real Estate Investment Management**

Mary Ludgin is Heitman's Head of Global Investment Research. She is a partner of the firm and sits on its Global Management, Investment, and Valuation Committees. Mary oversees Heitman's work in the realm of ESG and has served as editor of the series on Climate Risk that Heitman authored in collaboration with the Urban Land Institute. The third report in that series was released in February 2022 and focuses on Climate Migration.

Mary served as a Global Trustee of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and as chair of ULI's Chicago District Council. She currently chairs the board of ULI's Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability in Real Estate. She previously served as Chair of the Pension Real Estate Association, President of the National Council of Real Estate Investment Fiduciaries, and President of the Real Estate Research Institute. In 2019, Mary received PREA's James A. Graaskamp award, which recognizes researchers whose work contributes to the common body of knowledge regarding real estate investment.

Mary holds an A.B. from Vassar College and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Northwestern University.

## *Ronan Remandaban*

**Executive Managing Director and Industrial Market Leader,  
Bradford Allen**

Ronan Remandaban is the Executive Managing Director and Industrial Market Leader for Bradford Allen. He is responsible for building and leading the industrial brokerage division at Bradford Allen. He also sources industrial acquisitions for the firm. Ronan brings over 20 years of experience in commercial real estate to Bradford Allen. He has advised on over 15 million square feet in deals valued at over \$1 billion throughout his career.

Before joining Bradford Allen, he was active in the commercial real estate tech industry as an executive at Truss and as co-founder of Liquideed, an online commercial real estate investment platform. Ronan was previously a commercial real estate broker at Lee & Associates as an industrial investment specialist in the Private Capital Investment Group. He began his career at CBRE, specializing in industrial landlord and tenant representation.

Ronan is on the Advisory Board of ULI Chicago and is a Technology and Real Estate National Council member at ULI.

## *Thomas Walstrum*

**Senior Economist,  
Chicago Federal Reserve**

Thomas Walstrum is a senior business economist in the economic research department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. His responsibilities include the Seventh District's contribution to the Beige Book, the Chicago Fed Survey of Business Conditions, and briefings for the Chicago Fed president on Seventh District economic conditions. He also is a contributing author to the Bank's Midwest Economy blog.

Thomas holds a B.A. in economics from Wheaton College, Illinois, and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago, with concentrations in labor and urban and regional economics.

## *Mike Wojcik*

**Executive Vice President,  
The Horton Group**

Mike Wojcik is Executive Vice President and Shareholder of The Horton Group, one of the largest privately held, multiline insurance agencies specializing in Insurance, Risk Advisory, and Employee Benefits. He joined Horton in 1989 as one of the founding partners of the benefit brokerage and consulting division. His leadership and innovative drive have helped the division earn continuous growth and gained Mike recognition as a thought leader in the industry.

Mike earned his bachelor's degree from Roosevelt University and an MBA from Lewis University. He received his Certified Financial Planner® (CFP®) designation from the American College and is a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU). Mike most recently received a Group Benefits Associate (GBA) designation through the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans at the Wharton University of Pennsylvania. Mike also has a Professional Certificate in Public Finance from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. To round out Mike's health care perspective he serves on several insurance carrier and related industry advisory boards.

At the national level, Mike is regarded as an industry expert. He is the Chair of the Big 'I' National Health Care Task Force in Washington D.C. which supports government affairs efforts on health care legislation. The Big "I" is a national association of more than 250,000 insurance agents. Mike also serves on the Legislative Council of the National Association of Benefit and Insurance Professionals (NABIP, formerly NAHU) in Washington, D.C., which represents over 100,000 health benefit specialists who work diligently to ensure all Americans have access to high-quality, affordable health care.