

LAWYERS ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK

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CHRIS M. SMITH, *Shearman & Sterling LLP*

Leading pro bono attorney helps nonprofits negotiate real estate transactions critical to their future

Chris M. Smith is a partner in the Real Estate practice at Shearman & Sterling LLP. He received a B.S. from Rutgers University in 1973 and a J.D. from Columbia University School of Law in 1976.

Since 2003, Mr. Smith and colleagues have provided legal counsel to **Downtown Community Television Center (DCTV)**, a media arts center that fosters diverse viewpoints by providing professional training, state-of-the-industry resources, and by creating outstanding documentary productions. DCTV has been engaged in negotiating the complicated process of disposal of real property development “air rights” associated with its premises in lower Manhattan. As the project nears completion after many years, Catherine Martinez, Managing Director at DCTV says, “We would have been like a little fish swimming with the sharks were it not for this fantastic legal team, so smart and well-versed in the real estate world. They have fought tooth and nail for a fair deal. Like a rock star, Chris is brilliant, charming, and good with words.”

Mr. Smith has donated hundreds of hours to negotiate on behalf of DCTV, in an effort to turn unused air rights into an endowment that will sustain the organization. The latest deal is a complex, bi-lateral agreement between DCTV, New York City, and a private developer. It involves packaging DCTV’s air rights with a City-owned property adjacent to the building, taking it to public bid for sale, and gaining community approval and sign-off from City officials. Says Ms. Martinez, “We are so grateful that we can focus on delivering our mission to foster diverse viewpoints through documentary film and serve the more than 15,000 New Yorkers annually.”

Mr. Smith also assisted **Philanthropy New York**, a public charity dedicated to enhancing the capacity of philanthropists located in the New York region, to finalize a sublease. In addition, he encourages pro bono work by supervising colleagues on matters for economic development organizations.

“Working with Lawyers Alliance over the past several years to help nonprofit organizations provide vital programs and services to low-income communities has been a rewarding experience for me and those at Shearman & Sterling who have worked closely with me on matters such as the sale of air rights for DCTV,” says Mr. Smith. “I am grateful to Lawyers Alliance for making these opportunities available and to my colleagues at Shearman & Sterling for their unwavering support. And, of course, a sincere thank you to my family for their love, support, and encouragement along the way.”

