

JANUARY 18, 2019 - **HSP REAL ESTATE GROUP** IN THE NEWS - By E.B. Solomont

Inside REBNY's 2019 gala

Who's who in real estate converged in Midtown, but Cuomo and de Blasio were no shows



*Honorees of REBNY's 123rd gala, from left to right: Alex Bernstein of Bernstein Real Estate, Helena Rose Durst of the Durst Organization, Dan Tishman of Tishman Realty & Construction, Bill Rudin of Rudin Management, Carol Kellermann of the Citizens Budget Commission, John Banks of REBNY, **Ira Fishman of HSP Real Estate Group**, Diane Ramirez of Halstead Real Estate and Bernard Warren of Webb & Brooker.*

(Credit: Jill Lotenberg/REBNY)

Would it be the Real Estate Board of New York's annual gala without the boisterous schmooze fest drowning out the evening's official program? In that regard, the 123rd annual gathering of real estate's biggest names did not disappoint.

Among the 2,000 attendees who converged on the New York Hilton in Midtown were Dan Tishman, who received the Harry B. Helmsley Distinguished New Yorker award, along with CBRE's Mary Ann Tighe, Paul Massey of B6 Real Estate Advisors, the Corcoran Group's Pam Liebman and MaryAnne Gilmartin, celebrating the first anniversary of L&L MAG, an investment firm she launched last year with David Levinson and Robert Lapidus.

Even after the great dress code revolution of 2017, a good number of (male) guests showed up wearing tuxedos, including JLL's Bob Knakal and attorney Stephen Meister. But one outfit stood out: Amol Sarva, the co-founder and CEO of flexible office space company Knotel, sported a khaki jacket sprinkled with Knotel badges, overlaying a blue Hawaiian shirt and a white beaded necklace.

Bill Rudin, in his first year as REBNY chair, joked that his tenure so far went well enough that he'll be coming back for a second year.

In fact, REBNY will be gearing up for a high-stakes battle in Albany over the state of New York City's rent-regulated apartments. "We're going to be working very, very hard on that to ensure we get a fair piece of legislation," said REBNY president John Banks. "What we don't want to happen is for

the private sector housing stock to deteriorate like the public sector housing stock, which is a result of disinvestment."

Despite that looming political fight — and the divisive national climate — commercial brokers were in jovial spirits, coming off a year in which retail leasing and i-sales produced strong returns. Meridian Capital Group's David Schechtman said it's first time since 2014 that he thinks this year will be better than the last.

"There were 35 million square feet of new deals — 42 million if you take renewals — that's a torrid pace," said Bruce Mosler, chairman of global brokerage at Cushman & Wakefield, reflecting on last year's deal flow. "In no small way, the co-working companies contributed to that, in addition to being a major disruptor in our industry."

Others weighed in on whether Amazon, which announced it would bring 25,000 jobs to a Long Island City campus, would reshape the market.

"We welcome Amazon — it's going to be fabulous," said Leslie Wohlman Himmel, whose firm Himmel & Meringoff Properties has owned in the area since 1985. "But it has been slowly changing to the better for a long time, I've watched Long Island City change now for over three decades."

Among the residential players, brokers shared a bit of optimism about the market — mainly because they said things couldn't get much worse than last year.

"I think the market actually has hit bottom," said Halstead CEO Diane Ramirez, who received the Bernard H. Mendik Lifetime Leadership in Real Estate Award on Thursday night. "Anyone buying now I think will do very well."

Notably absent from Thursday night's festivities were Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio. But Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer was there and New York Sen. Chuck Schumer made an appearance — saying he was able to drop by because nothing was happening in Washington while the government was shut down.

Schumer also plugged the long-delayed project to repair the train tunnel underneath the Hudson River.

"Let's build that... Gateway Tunnel!" he said, mimicking President Trump's call for a border wall.