



## **Zachary Bernstein, 39**

*Partner, Fried Frank Harris  
Shriver & Jacobson*

Daniel Geiger

One of Canada's biggest real estate investors was closing in on a \$700 million purchase of St. John's Terminal last year when it hit a snag.

A section of the building spans above

West Houston Street. Would an overhaul of the property be able to use the square footage perched over the roadway—normally a no-man's-land for development?

Oxford Properties dialed Zachary Bernstein, a land-use attorney and partner at Fried Frank, who has increasingly become the fixer behind a long list of major development deals in the city. The answer—yes—helped the firm win the hotly contested auction. Now Bernstein is helping Oxford convert the property into a home for Google.

In an increasingly dense city, developers have relied on Bernstein's encyclopedic knowledge of zoning to creatively piece together deals that would otherwise not be viable

For example, when the developer of a residential tower at 50 West St. realized five years ago that it hadn't properly accounted for space to house building systems, Bernstein persuaded city planners to grant 54 feet of extra height. "I argued successfully that this was a zoning district that never intended to limit height," he said.

Bernstein happened into the field as an undergraduate, when he got a job in the Cornell University planning department. He then went to Fordham Law School and interned at the Municipal Arts Society, a prominent civic organization. By then he was hooked on city planning.

"It's not just arcane codes; it's strategy, and it's politics too," Bernstein said. "I have always been captivated by the energy of the city. And what is that? It's how it's planned."