

JEFF HARRIS

Guiding Building Owners Through Tricky Projects

by John Flynn Rooney

As do little boys with Tinker Toys and Lego blocks, attorney Jeff Harris still finds wonder in “how” the real-life construction projects he shepherds are designed and built.

Harris, a partner at **Figliulo & Silverman P.C.**, says when he started practicing law in 1978, he initially worked on eminent domain cases at Foran, Wiss & Schultz.

Early on, Harris began representing Schal Associates Inc., a construction manager involved in a lawsuit related to the construction and design of the parking garage at the Cook County Circuit Court’s Second Municipal District courthouse in Skokie.

Harris says he knew nothing about construction law.

“But what I found interesting about it at the time, which was really unrelated to the law, but something that still is of the same interest to

variety of issues. The company grew during the 1980s and generated a commensurate large volume of legal work.

“I benefitted tremendously from that, because I expanded my relationship with them,” he says.

In 1993, Bovis acquired Schal and Lend Lease later bought Bovis. The company is now known as Lend Lease (US) Construction Inc. and remains a client, Harris says.

“I have been truly blessed from a business standpoint and also from the standpoint of meeting a lot of interesting people and having this relationship that’s evolved over a period of more than 30 years,” he says.

Before Bovis bought Schal, the company did not employ an in-house counsel.

“So, not only was I doing a lot of litigation for Schal Associates, but I was also doing a lot of other legal functions for them and was

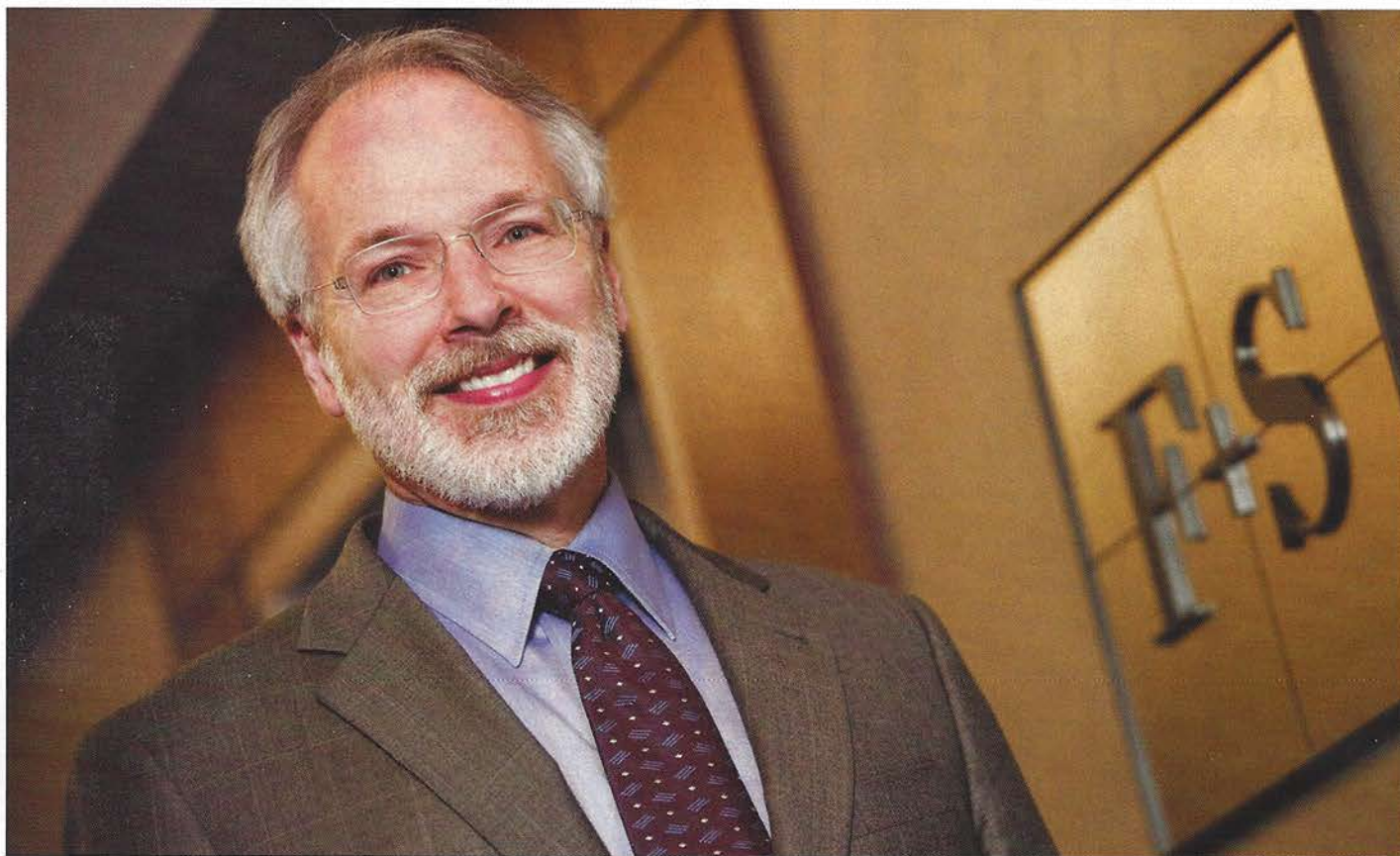
“I think he provides excellent value to his clients,” Giordano says. “He doesn’t waste time, he doesn’t overstaff and his rates are competitive.”

Harris works on disputes with trade contractors, suppliers and the rare instances in which Lend Lease gets involved in disputes with owners, Giordano says.

Giordano calls Harris “a straight shooter. He relies on his work product ... to foster the relationship. He lets that speak for itself.”

The projects Harris worked on for Schal Associates included the redevelopment at Navy Pier in the 1990s, which he calls a fascinating project.

“When you’re doing a project that size and involving that many moving pieces, you’re going to have a very interesting and challenging experience,” he says.



me, is how structures are designed and built.

“I didn’t fully appreciate the process ... and it intrigued me,” he says about the construction of a large building.

After working on the courthouse parking garage case for a couple of years, Harris continued representing Schal Associates in a

acknowledged, at least by some, as their de facto general counsel,” he says.

Thomas V. Giordano, general counsel for construction at Lend Lease Americas, got to know Harris about 12 years ago. He calls Harris a highly competent, incisive and thoughtful advocate.

Harris’ law partner, James R. Figliulo, says he met Harris in 1980, when they worked together at Foran, Wiss & Schultz.

“I watched him grow and mature as a lawyer,” Figliulo says. “I watched as he gained experience and how his judgment in complicated matters (Continued on Page 46)