

Office Snapshot: Latham Stretches Out In Texas Capital

By Lynn LaRowe

Law360 (April 20, 2023, 4:23 PM EDT) -- Latham & Watkins LLP moved this week into a newly designed two-floor space at Austin's 300 Colorado St. office tower to accommodate the nearly tenfold growth in the firm's Texas capital roster since it arrived there less than two years ago.

As its Austin team expanded from four partners to nearly 40 attorneys, Latham spent 18 months building out the space in 300 Colorado, which is about a block away from the firm's prior location at 301 Congress Ave., according to office managing partner Sam Zabaneh.

Zabaneh recently told Law360 Pulse that the new office was "concrete and glass when we started" and is now "a special place."



Sam Zabaneh

"It's kind of a mix between modern, a little bit of industrial development, but with a very clean and classy look," he said.

Zabaneh and three other Austin-based partners from peer firms joined Latham in the fall of 2021 in an expansion of the firm's Texas footprint, which also includes a Houston location. By the end of the firm's time at its previous Austin office, Zabaneh said, "We were pretty full up and without nearly the conference room and collaboration space that you would hope for."

The new location not only boasts picturesque views of Lady Bird Lake and the city's skyline, but is decorated with unique, regionally themed commissioned art and photographs that celebrate the Lone Star State. Zabaneh said the space "does a nice job of making you feel like you're not necessarily in an office, but you're part of the environment."

"You can stretch out here," Zabaneh said. "We've got room to grow."

The Leader

Zabaneh has been the managing partner in Austin since the office opened in late 2021, coming aboard after 17 years at DLA Piper. He said his practice focuses on the "life cycle of high-growth companies."

"It's often a tech company but not always," Zabaneh said. "It could be a tech-enabled services company. It could be tech-adjacent."

Zabaneh noted that "usually in Austin there is some tech component [but] the practice extends well beyond Austin because of relationships with venture capitalists, private equity and entrepreneurs that have [relocated]."

Zabaneh said he represents a broad swath of clients in the areas of venture capital, private equity, mergers and acquisitions, capital markets transactions and some private companies.

His clients include venture capital group Next Coast Ventures, software company SourceDay, private equity group Tritium Partners and BigCommerce, an e-commerce company that Zabaneh said he helped take "public during the pandemic that I still work with."

"I've been fortunate with a lot of [the clients I work with] to have two or three iterations with the same executives when they sell a company and then go on to do their next thing," Zabaneh said. "It's fun to know your clients. It's fun to see your clients in their next opportunity. We've got quite a bit of the repeat entrepreneur-next gig representation."

"I don't take that lightly," he said. "It is a source of pride and enjoyment for the practice."

The Location

300 Colorado, as it's known, is situated in Austin's unique downtown Warehouse District, which boasts a mix of office buildings, cocktail lounges, restaurants and music venues.

Latham's space on the 24th and 25th floors of the building has "floor to ceiling windows" that allow for spectacular views and abundant natural light, Zabaneh said. The office has kept true to its location with a combination of commissioned work by Lone Star State artists and photography that includes scenes from the nearby Texas Hill Country, Zabaneh said.

"We've got a great view on each side, especially the lake view of Lady Bird Lake," he said. "And then that kind of transitions into the building, where you have pictures of the Pennybacker Bridge [over Lake Austin] and the Capitol."

The two-floor space "really flows" with a design meant to encourage contact between people, Zabaneh said, noting that the setup makes it natural for senior and junior attorneys to mingle and encourages the all-important mentorships essential in an "apprenticeship profession."

The Austin location uses corner spaces for wellness, collaboration or meeting rooms instead of offices. On one floor, there also is a room with a Peloton and a shower, while a workout room with a wall mirror and another shower is located on the other floor.

"You can get a quick workout, shower and get back to your desk," Zabaneh said. "If you want to go for a run on the trail, you could do that and then hit one of the private showers. We also have a gym in the building with a phenomenal view."

The Team

58 total employees

12 partners

24 associates
22 other staff

The Work

Corporate law, usually with a tech component, accounts for most of the office's work, Zabaneh said, adding that there is a "reasonable amount of energy work" as well.

The office focuses on advising founders, companies, venture capital firms and private equity sponsors, the firm said in a statement.

A couple of the office's partners and several associates are focused on intellectual property litigation, Zabaneh said, adding that one partner does insurance litigation and another primarily practices antitrust litigation with a smaller transactional antitrust component.

"We look to be a full-service firm," he said. "We want to be able to do everything the Austin market needs."

Zabaneh pointed out that the Austin office has access to the entire Latham platform and routinely makes use of the expertise of colleagues across the U.S. and abroad.

"It's seamless," Zabaneh said. "There is no need to have everything local. The day doesn't go by when I'm not connecting with other offices."

Comings and Goings

The four Austin-based partners who joined Latham in 2021 — Zabaneh, Jenifer Smith, Scott Craig and Mollie Duckworth — are all still with the firm.

Like Zabaneh, Smith joined from DLA Piper while Craig came aboard from Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC and Duckworth arrived from Baker Botts LLP.

Zabaneh said "everyone is new at the Austin Latham office," and that the firm broadly views collaboration among colleagues as essential to its culture and success.

"Culture is not a static thing. Everybody just adds a little to the fabric. Whether it's like a quilt or a river, culture is ever-changing," he said. "I feel we're fortunate for everybody to have had a chance to be part of the creation moment, the origin moment here. Austin is the sort of place where everybody likes that."

--Editing by Jill Coffey.