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INDUSTRY WATCH

Trio Forms Environmental Law Boutique

Opper & Varco Represents Cities in Urban Revitalization Projects

By Liz Valsamis

Richard Opper, Suzanne Varco and Linda Beresford have formed San Diego-based environmental law boutique Opper & Varco.

The group represents Los Angeles and San Diego in those cities' urban revitalization projects.

"We felt that the kind of work we do, which is relatively specialized, doesn't benefit from being a national firm platform. I think that our clients only end up with more costs under that format," Opper says. "We've come to learn that the service can be provided much more effectively as a boutique."

Opper and Beresford hail from the San Diego Office of Foley & Lardner, where they worked for two years. That firm has two offices in San Diego that employ 45 lawyers. Firmwide, Foley & Lardner employs 1,000 lawyers and has offices in 17 cities. Before joining Foley & Lardner, Opper and Beresford practiced with McKenna & Cuneo, now McKenna Long & Aldridge.

Varco comes to the new firm from her solo practice in San Diego. Before forming her practice in 1996, Varco was a lawyer with now-defunct Lorenz, Alhadeff, Cannon & Rose, which was based in San Diego.

"We've been talking about [merging practices] for several years," Varco says. "We got to a point where what we were doing for our clients was similar. ... We thought our practice would mesh well together, and we thought this would be a fun time to do it."



"We've come to learn that the service can be provided much more effectively as a boutique," says Richard Opper, with partners Suzanne Varco, left, and Linda Beresford.

Some of the work Opper has handled includes the planning and regulatory support work for Petco Park, the new home of Major League Baseball's San Diego Padres, which is scheduled to open next year.

He's also successfully represented the Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Diego, which sued San Diego property owners to acquire

a large piece of property that had fallen under eminent domain. *Redevelopment Agency of the City of San Diego v. Salvation Army*, 103 Cal. App. 4th 755 (4th Dist. 2002).

Additional clients coming to the firm include the San Diego Port District and Greyhound Lines Inc.