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ASKED & ANSWERED

SURI KASIRER **Kasirer LLC**

INTERVIEW BY WILL BREDDERMAN

The daughter of an Orthodox rabbi who grew up in a mostly Catholic enclave in Queens, Suri Kasirer has spent a lifetime navigating New York City's dynamic social and political landscape. For more than 20 years she has used her skills and experience on behalf of the clients of Kasirer LLC, the biggest lobbying firm in the five boroughs.

In our political climate, how do you lobby for business?

To be an advocate, you have to think about the best way to frame an argument. You want to consider who out there supports your position and make sure that those people are activated. People in my business often sell relationships. You need to have relationships just to get a hearing, but that doesn't mean the person is going to do something. You have to build a credible case about what's the right thing to do.

If the lobbying business isn't about selling relationships, what is it then?

At least at my firm, we're in the business of strategic plans. I'll be honest with people who come in with something that I don't believe is achievable. I'm looking to get paid for something I believe is achievable, and I can see a path to achieving it. It's not because I have the relationships but because it's the right thing for the city.

What happened with Amazon?

When people are out there saying, "Why don't we take

DOSSIER

WHO SHE IS Founder, Kasirer LLC

BORN Glendale, Queens

RESIDES Upper West Side

EDUCATION Bachelor's in sociology and history, Yeshiva University

GRANDMASTER Her first great coup as a consultant was getting chess legend Garry Kasparov to play the 1995 world championship atop the World Trade Center instead of in Germany.

POWER ELITE While an aide to the late Gov. Mario Cuomo, she helped draw up a report on the 1991 Crown Heights riots, then worked for the re-election bid of then-Mayor David Dinkins—a job that introduced her to her husband, Bruce Teitelbaum, an aide to GOP candidate Rudy Giuliani.



the \$3 billion that we're giving to Amazon and put it toward education?" I realize that people don't even understand the fundamentals of how this works. People are having conversations that don't make sense. The rallies

against Amazon in many cases were quite small—10 to 30 people. But a vocal minority can determine what happens if you're not able to activate the supporters. In this case, 32BJ, the building trades, were hugely supportive, but they weren't necessarily vocal.

Is there a chance Amazon will reconsider LIC?

I guess we will have to wait and see what they decide.

Your client portfolio has many real estate developers. What is the current state of NIMBYism?

There's always potential opposition. It's increasingly important to figure out what are the benefits to the local community. Citywide benefits, such as if you're bringing health care or best-in-class into a community, can be part of the story, but there always has to be a local component. Are there local parks that can benefit? Is there beautification? Are there trees that can be planted on the block? Is there affordable housing in the development that some of the local folks could access? Are there jobs local folks can get?

How does your client Madison Square Garden fit into the future of Penn Station?

Madison Square Garden is a very important gem in New York, and I don't see them moving any time soon. The redevelopment of Penn Station is incredibly important—it's a gateway to New York in the way that LaGuardia and Kennedy are. It's a mess. It's ugly. It's dirty. It needs to be cleaned up—both aboveground and underneath. You can't even walk on the sidewalk there anymore. There needs to be a major cleanup of that area.

Your husband was Mayor Rudy Giuliani's chief of staff. What do you think is going on in Giuliani's head right now?

[Laughs] I have no idea. ■