

Godwin Bowman Scores \$22M Victory for Maya Walnut LLC in Commercial Lease Fraud Dispute

DALLAS – A Dallas County jury returned a swift and unanimous \$22 million verdict for Godwin Bowman PC client Maya Walnut LLC in a case that began as a commercial lease dispute but evolved into a complex fraud matter.

Maya Walnut, which held a lease agreement with defendant Walnut Creek Center Inc. to operate a grocery store in Garland, Texas, was awarded \$1.5 million for past lost profits and \$3 million for future lost profits, or alternatively \$12 million for lost business value. In addition, the jury awarded \$10 million for punitive damages.

According to court documents, Maya Walnut conducted lease renewal negotiations with Walnut Creek Center over an 18-month period. During that time, the defendants were “surreptitiously negotiating a lease agreement for the same premises with the plaintiff’s competitor.” Even after the property had been leased to the competing business, Walnut Creek Center continued to represent to Maya Walnut that it was willing to keep negotiating the lease for the same premises, according to the lawsuit.

The June 29 verdict found Walnut Creek Center and related parties liable for fraud, conspiracy to commit fraud, negligent misrepresentation, and promissory estoppel.

“It was clear the defendants concealed and misrepresented information from Maya Walnut, and we were pleased the jury returned with a decision that affirmed Walnut Creek Center’s wrongdoings,” said Godwin Bowman attorney Ira Bowman.

The case was the first multiday live jury trial in Dallas County's 68th District Court before Judge Martin Hoffman since COVID-19 shut down the courthouse.

In addition to Mr. Bowman, Maya Walnut LLC was represented at trial by Godwin Bowman attorney Samantha Baynes.

The case is No. DC-19-06309 Maya Walnut LLC f/k/a Maya Foods Inc. v. Brian Ly and Walnut Creek Center, Inc., in the 68th Dallas County District Court.