

People



Cecelia Bonifay

Chair, Land Use and Development Practice
Orlando

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vCard

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Cecelia Bonifay, chair of Akerman's Land Use and Development Practice, helps developers navigate the governmental approval process for their real estate projects. With a strong background in urban planning and development approvals for large-scale projects, she has represented DDR, FedEx, Kitson & Partners, Mattamy Homes, and Pineloch Management, among others in the development of commercial, residential, and industrial projects. Clients benefit from her keen analysis of a wide range of land use, zoning, sustainable development, and environmental matters. She performs due diligence for development projects in Florida and across the United States.

Collaborating with the firm's land use development and planning professionals, Cecelia assists clients in permitting and structuring economic incentives packages. Having worked in a variety of posts in Florida government agencies, Cecelia understands the approval process from both sides of the table. Her professional accolades include recognition in *Chambers USA* and *The Legal 500* as a leading lawyer in land use and zoning.

Cecelia has devoted more than 25 years to the community. She has held several leadership positions at the Urban Land Institute, including co-chair of the Climate Change, Land Use, and Energy Committee, immediate past chair of its Florida Statewide Summit, a current member of its 2017 Executive Planning Committee, and chair of its Central Florida District Council. She is a member of the Advisory Board for the Kelley A. Bergstrom Real Estate Center at the University of Florida and secretary treasurer of the Orlando Economic Development Commission. She also serves as the president emeritus of the Crealde School of Art and as a board member of United Arts of Central Florida.

Notable Work

Commercial: Represented FedEx Ground in obtaining \$3.5 million in economic development incentives and the subsequent due diligence, negotiation, and acquisition of a 150-acre site for its \$100 million state-of-the-art facility in Central Florida, its first major hub in more than a decade.

Residential: Represented the developer in the due diligence, acquisition, and extensive permitting of a 4,000 acre, mixed-use Development of Regional Impact in Florida (DRI). Designed as a sustainable community, the work encompassed the procurement of all necessary entitlements, including municipal annexation and drafting of the comprehensive plan amendment, development order, and related agreements. Secured various credit agreements with local, regional, and state transportation agencies on

Areas of Experience

- Affordable and Workforce Housing
- Alcohol Beverage
- Cannabis
- Commercial Leasing and Development
- Economic Development and Incentives
- Energy
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Regulation
- Florida Land Use and Entitlements
- Green Energy
- Healthcare Real Estate
- Hospitality
- Hospitality Acquisition and Development
- Land Use and Development
- Local Government Advocacy
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Real Estate
- Real Estate and Construction
- Real Property Tax Planning and Appeals
- Residential Land Acquisitions and Development
- Transportation Regulation and Policy
- Water Task Force
- Qualified Opportunity Zones

Education

- J.D., Florida State University College of Law, 1985
- M.S.D., Florida State University, Urban & Regional Planning, 1973
- B.A., Florida State University, History, 1967

Admissions

Bars

- Florida

Related Content

- Akerman Sponsors the CREW Network Convention & Marketplace 2019

behalf of the developer.

September 25, 2019

Cecelia Bonifay to Speak on Real Estate Investment and Capital Markets

June 13, 2019

Akerman Sponsors the Urban Land Institute Florida Summit 2019

June 12, 2019

Industrial: Represented the property owners of the proposed Monarch Industrial Park, a 16 million square foot facility at the intersection of I-75, the Florida Turnpike, State Road 44, and the CSX Railroad S-Line. Guided the client through the entitlement process, negotiating with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the major utility providers regarding infrastructure needs. Represent the owners as the FDOT prepares its Intersection Justification report for a new interchange to benefit the project. The facility is expected to bring as many as 19,000 jobs to the region.

Related Professional Experience

- Lake County, Florida, City Attorney and Attorney to the Lake County School Board
- Department of Community Affairs, Florida, Assistant to the Secretary and Lobbyist
- Department of Administration, Florida, Liaison to the State's 11 Regional Planning Councils

Published Work and Lectures

- Cecelia is a frequent speaker on the topics of land use and growth management, development incentives, green energy and climate change, and green building and LEED certification.
- **2019 Akerman U.S. Real Estate Sector Report**, Contributor
- **2018 Akerman U.S. Real Estate Sector Report**, Contributor
- **2017 Akerman U.S. Real Estate Sector Report**, Contributor
- Akerman's Guide to Doing Business in Florida: A Legal Guide for Out-of-State and Foreign Businesses, Author, "Easements" and "Land Use and Zoning," 2016

Affiliations

- Orlando Economic Partnership, Executive Committee Member, Board Member; Finance Committee, Co-Chair
- Orlando Economic Development Commission, Board of Directors, Secretary/Treasurer, 2016; Finance & Audit Committee, Chair, 2016; Strategic Planning Committee, Chair, 2016; Business Development Committee, Former Co-Chair, 2016
- Bergstrom Center For Real Estate Studies, University of Florida, Advisory Board Member
- Urban Land Institute (ULI), Central Florida District Council, Board Member, Past Chair; ULI Florida Summit, Chair
- Urban Land Institute (ULI), Climate Change, Land Use, and Energy (CLUE) Committee, Co-Chair
- Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) of Orlando, Past President
- International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), Member
- Orange County Arts & Cultural Affairs Advisory Council
- Crealde School of Art, Board of Directors; Past President, Past Secretary
- United Arts of Central Florida, Board Member
- Leadership Lake and Orange Counties, Graduate

Honors and Distinctions

- *Chambers USA* 2019, Ranked in top tier in Florida (Outside Miami) for Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use; 2008-2018, Ranked in Florida for Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use
- *The Legal 500* 2008-2009, 2012-2018, Recommended for Real Estate & Construction - Land Use/Zoning
- *The Best Lawyers in America*, 2014, 2017, Named as a "Lawyer of the Year" for Land Use and Zoning Law in Orlando
- *The Best Lawyers in America* 2006-2019, Listed in Florida for Environmental Law, Land Use & Zoning Law, and Real Estate Law
- *Super Lawyers Magazine* 2007, 2009-2018, Listed in Florida for Real

Estate and Land Use/Zoning

- *Real Estate Florida* 2008, Recognized as "Woman of Influence"
- *Florida Real Estate Journal* 2004, Recognized as a "Top Woman in Commercial Real Estate"