



James H. McNeil Jr.



Shareholder Chair, Residential Development Practice

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Practices

Real Estate

Education

J.D., Stetson University College
of Law, 1995

M.S., Florida State University,
1992; Urban and Regional
Planning

B.S., Florida State University,
1990

Bar Admissions

Florida

Jim McNeil represents property owners, developers, homebuilders, lenders, investors, and private equity groups in the acquisition, financing, development, entitlement, and sale of property in Florida. He represents clients in all phases of development for commercial, residential, and mixed-use projects including contract negotiation, due diligence, land acquisition/disposition, and procurement of land use approvals and entitlements. Jim handles matters involving land use, zoning, and other entitlements in numerous jurisdictions including Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs), comprehensive plan amendments, zonings, special exceptions, variances, conditional use permits, as well as development agreements, development orders, annexation agreements, and concurrency approvals in the areas of school capacity, transportation, and utilities.

Jim has been actively involved in the distressed property market, representing private equity groups, hedge funds, and other investors in the matters of distressed real estate, including short sale purchases and the purchase of loans or REO assets from lenders. He is also actively advising lenders and other financial institutions on the disposition of distressed assets, review and analysis of entitlements, and potential repositioning of properties for resale.

Areas of Experience

- Affordable & Workforce Housing
- Distressed Property
- Environment & Natural Resources
- Florida Land Use & Entitlements
- Green & Sustainable Development
- Land Use & Development
- Office Leasing & Development
- Real Estate Acquisitions & Sales
- Residential & Multifamily Development

Retail Leasing & Development

Representative Experience

- Representation of national homebuilders in all phases of development for residential projects, including contract negotiation, due diligence, land acquisition/disposition, and land use approvals and entitlements.
- Representation of a consortium of developers with six contiguous DRIs formed in connection with a Developer's Agreement with Osceola County, FL, related to transportation concurrency and the associated construction of approximately \$250 million in transportation improvements, as well as representation in connection with utility concurrency, and school concurrency issues. The six projects comprise approximately 30,313 residential units and approximately four million square feet of commercial development.
- Representation of landowner in rare expansion of Urban Service Boundary in Orange County, FL to allow creation of an airport and mixed-use project. Project includes over 400 acres for the creation of a new airport and a proposed 2.8 million square feet of industrial space, 750,000 square feet of aviation-related space, 150,000 square feet of office space, and 50,000 square feet of commercial space.
- Representation of various master planned community developers with mixed-use projects in the Central Florida market.
- Representation of private equity client in the matter of a large portfolio of distressed loans covering projects in various locations within Florida.
- Representation of developer in expedited approvals for all necessary entitlements for the development of a retail center in Orange County, FL, a portion of which is LEED Certified. Representation included the negotiation with the County to allow approvals to run on concurrent paths.
- Representation of retail developer in workout deals associated with numerous large retail tenants, retail centers, and big box projects located throughout Central Florida.

Awards & Recognition

- American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), Member
- *The Best Lawyers in America* 2010, 2011, Listed in Florida for Real Estate Law
- Martindale-Hubbell, AV Rated

Published Work & Lectures

- Florida Home Builders Association's Road to Recovery, Speaker, "Chinese Drywall, Legal Implications for Builders," Orlando, Florida; Port Charlotte, Florida; Estero, Florida; Naples, Florida; June 2009
- Opal Financial Group's Annual Real Estate Investors Summit, Speaker, "Legal, Bankruptcy, Borrower Negotiations, and Foreclosure Strategies," Orlando, Florida, April 2009
- IMN's 2nd Florida Distressed Residential Real Estate Symposium, Speaker, "Land Investing and Warehousing for Development," Hollywood, Florida, December 2008
- Home Builders Association of Metro Orlando, Speaker, "Foreclosures and Bankruptcy in Florida," Orlando, Florida, June 2008
- Home Builders Association of Metro Orlando, Speaker, "Traffic and School Concurrency Issues," Orlando, Florida, March 2007

Professional Memberships & Activities

- National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) Land Development Committee, Member
- Home Builders Association of Metro Orlando, Board Member
- City of Ocoee Planning and Zoning Commission, Past Member
- Florida Planning and Zoning Association (FPZA), Member
- American Planning Association, Member
- Urban Land Institute (ULI), Member
- The Florida Bar, Member

Associated News, Events & Publications

News

- Jim McNeil, Chair of Akerman Senterfitt's Residential Development Practice, Quoted in the *Orlando Sentinel* on the State of the Commercial Real Estate Market in Orlando (Nov. 22, 2010)
- Akerman Senterfitt Attorneys Stacy Bercun Bohm and Jim McNeil Quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* on Relief of Chinese Drywall Liability (Nov. 11, 2010)
- Jim McNeil, Chair of Akerman Senterfitt's Residential Development Practice Quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* on Home Builders Acquiring Land (Apr. 21, 2010)
- Homebuilders Return, Scramble for Prime Sites (Dec. 1, 2009)
- The 2010 Best Lawyers Ranking Honors 100 Akerman Senterfitt Attorneys (Aug. 26, 2009)