



Press Release

Akerman Advances Chicago Growth with Prominent Land Use Team Led by Veteran Jack George

March 28, 2017

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, continued the expansion of its Chicago office with a team of leading real estate, land use and zoning partners headed by veteran lawyer **John "Jack" George**. A former assistant attorney general and assistant corporation counsel for the City of Chicago, Jack George served as president and board member of his former Chicago law firm. Akerman also welcomes **Kathleen "Kate" Duncan**, **Chris Leach** and **Meg George**.

The distinguished team has handled some of the largest and most complex zoning projects in the Chicagoland area, including the redevelopment of the landmark Old Chicago Post Office and the premier Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, as well as the development of the \$1 billion Wolf Point project along the Chicago River. Together, the four partners bolster Akerman's core strength in the commercial real estate sector and they arrive at a time when the firm **plans** to more than double the size of its office in the region. Since its 2014 opening in Chicago, the office has grown nearly seven-times larger to more than 50 lawyers.

"Jack has been instrumental in shaping the Chicago skyline and he is one of the most highly respected land use and zoning lawyers in the market," said **Richard Bezold**, chair of Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group, which is ranked sixth by *Law360* among the largest teams of real estate lawyers in the United States. "Jack, Kate, Chris and Meg are skilled at cutting through the regulatory thicket of land development and their ability to secure vital property deals for U.S. and multinational clients is unparalleled. They will be a tremendous resource for our clients in what continues to be a dynamic commercial real estate market."

Jack George

Jack George brings more than 40 years of experience to his real estate, land use and zoning practice. He is a valued leader among his peers and clients because he develops relationships built on trust and a deep knowledge of real estate law. He has been instrumental in shaping the Chicago skyline, and has worked on notable development projects that have included complex elements such as zoning map amendments, planned development applications and condemnation matters. Jack George is a former assistant attorney general and assistant corporation counsel for the City of Chicago. He knows how

to navigate clients through city and state laws, and has handled a broad range of litigation in state and federal courts, as well as proceedings before administrative tribunals and arbitrations.

Jack George has received high rankings by prominent legal guides for his unmatched knowledge of land use and zoning laws, and he is a leader across professional and community organizations, including his role as board member and general counsel of Little City Foundation; past president of the Celtic Lawyers Association; and advisory board member of Xavier University.

Meg George

Meg George has experience with real estate and municipal law matters including the acquisition, sale and development of real estate, land use and zoning, licensing, permitting, subdivision and other real estate matters. She has long represented the interest of numerous owners of shopping centers, convenience stores, hospitals, hotels, residential, commercial and mixed use buildings, office complexes, open space/conservation areas, schools, and libraries in the City of Chicago and suburban villages. Active in the community, Meg George is a LEED accredited professional, whose dedication to building green communities led her to assist in drafting Chicago's sustainability matrix for the city's Sustainability Task Force.

Kate Duncan

For more than a decade, Kate Duncan has concentrated her practice in zoning, land use and real estate law on behalf of developers, institutions and homeowners. She brings to her clients the added benefit of close and trusted working relationships with city officials and staff, as well as an in-depth understanding of how the city interprets land use and zoning codes. Duncan has successfully represented clients obtaining planned developments, zoning amendments, special uses, variations, subdivisions, vacations, dedications and various municipal licenses.

In addition to private practice, Duncan is the former chair of the Illinois State Bar Association's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Council and serves as commissioner of the zoning board of Appeals for the Village of Barrington, Ill.

Chris Leach

Chris Leach has more than 20 years of experience representing property owners, developers and business owners in zoning and land use matters, as well as real estate, liquor and business licensing. He has represented clients before municipal plan commissions, planning departments, zoning board of appeals, zoning committees, and community groups and organizations. He also has successfully represented clients in obtaining approvals of planned developments, zoning changes, special uses, variations, subdivisions, vacations and dedications.

About Akerman LLP

Akerman LLP is a leading transactions and trial law firm known for its core strengths in middle market M&A, within the financial services and real estate industries, and for a diverse Latin America practice. With more than 650 lawyers and government affairs professionals and a network of 24 offices, it is ranked among the top 100 law firms in the United States by *The American Lawyer* (2016). Akerman also is ranked among the top 60 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer's Diversity Scorecard* (2016).

Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group offers comprehensive and fully integrated project counsel services to clients across the United States and Latin America. With substantial industry experience and local market insights, the firm represents clients in complex real estate transactions and financings, development and redevelopment projects, public-private initiatives and litigation. Recognized as a national tier one law firm for real estate law by *U.S. News - Best Lawyers*, the group advises investors, developers, builders, lenders, retailers, owners and corporate end users, often in high profile matters.

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Related Biographies

Richard Bezold
Kathleen A. Duncan
John J. ('Jack') George
Meg E. George
Chris A. Leach