


People



**Richard G. Leland**

Partner, Real Estate  
Litigation

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” [He] stands out when dealing with litigation risk, working with complex agency rules, and understanding the commercial implications of environmental issues.

- *Chambers USA*

With a focus on land use, environmental law and litigation, Rick Leland has more than 45 years’ experience representing real estate developers, universities, non-profit organizations, and industrial companies on the environmental aspects of real estate transactions, development, and land use.

Rick’s work has been central in gaining approvals for – or defending lawsuits against – multiple billion dollar developments. He works with clients nationwide on a range of matters, including environmental impact review, regulatory and transactional counseling, as well as counseling operators and lenders in litigation arising under the Federal “Superfund” Law on a nationwide basis.

Rick also serves as counsel to developers, outdoor advertising companies, municipalities, and public authorities in zoning matters and litigation arising from zoning and environmental determinations in New York City and suburban counties in the New York metropolitan area. He has frequently appeared as amicus curiae for developers and for the Real Estate Board of New York, Inc. in significant environmental and land use cases in appellate courts in New York. He has recently been licensed to practice in Florida and

Areas of Experience

- Real Estate
- Brownfields Redevelopment
- Eminent Domain and Property Rights
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Environmental Litigation
- Land Use and Development
- Litigation
- New York Land Use and Zoning
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Real Estate Litigation
- Water Task Force
- Real Estate Acquisitions and Sales
- Distressed Property
- Equine Law
- Sports and Entertainment Law

Education

J.D., Hofstra University School of Law, 1974, with distinction, Hofstra Law Review  
B.S., Cornell University, 1971

Admissions

Bars

New York  
Florida

Courts

U.S. Supreme Court  
U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit  
U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit  
U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida  
U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York  
U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York  
U.S. District Court, Northern District of New York

Related Content

is representing clients in environmental and land use matters in Florida as well as in New York.

### Notable Work

**Inwood Rezoning Litigation:** Represented MADD Equities, Taconic Partners, ConEdison, and Shermans Creek Development Corp, as *amici curiae* in support of the City of New York and an area-wide amendment of the Zoning Resolution to allow for affordable housing and other community amenities. The Appellate Division, First Department, Supreme Court of the State of New York issued a unanimous decision reversing a lower court order that annulled the amendment, thus allowing development to proceed.

**Belmont Park Development Project:** Represented New York Arena Partners, a joint venture among The New York Islanders, Sterling Equities, and Oakview Group in connection with obtaining approvals for the development of a new arena for the Islanders, a retail village, and hotel in Nassau County, New York. Rick also was co-counsel in successfully defending two lawsuits challenging the approvals.

**Roosevelt Island Development:** Represented Cornell University as environmental counsel in the development of its \$2 billion, two million-square-foot New York City tech campus.

**Atlantic Yards Development:** Represented Forest City Ratner in winning dismissal of significant lawsuits against its \$4 billion Atlantic Yards Development in Brooklyn.

**The New York Public Library:** Represented The New York Public Library as environmental and litigation counsel for its proposed renovation of the historical Steven A. Schwarzman building and the successful defense of two lawsuits seeking to stop the project.

**Edgemere Commons Development:** Represented the developer of a multi-phase mixed use and affordable housing development in Far Rockaway Queens as environmental counsel in an application to rezone the site.

**Trinity Real Estate:** Represented Trinity Real Estate in connection with the 17 acre Hudson Square rezoning in New York City.

**Durst Organization and TF Cornerstone:** Representation of the Durst Organization and TF Cornerstone in the environmental reviews of rezoning and special permits for apartment buildings on West 57th Street.

**SL Green Realty Corp:** Represented SL Green Realty Corp., in an environmental review for 1 Vanderbilt, a 1.8 million square-foot office development near Grand Central Station.

**RAL Development Services:** Represented RAL Development Services successfully defending a litigation that sought to set aside governmental approvals for a two-building residential development, one of which contained affordable units, in Brooklyn Heights, NY.

**FAR Research, Inc.:** Representing FAR Research in land use litigation in Brevard County, Florida.

**Outdoor Advertising Companies:** Represented outdoor advertising companies in appeals from zoning determinations regulating signage in New York City.

Community Groups and Elected Officials Sue to Set Aside "City of Yes"  
April 03, 2025

Akerman Sponsors Annual University of Miami Real Estate Impact Conference  
February 07, 2025

Akerman Represents DMI Personal Care in Acquisition by TruArc Partners  
January 28, 2025

## Related Professional Experience

- Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Adjunct Professor
- Harvard Law School, Guest Lecturer

## Affiliations

- Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), Member; Management Division Environment Committee, Chairman
- New York State Bar Association, Environmental Law Section, Co-Chair of Environmental Impact Review Committee
- Real Estate Board of New York, Inc., Zoning and Design Committee, Member
- American Bar Association, Environmental Law and Local Government Sections, Member
- American Bar Association, Section of Environment, Energy and Resources “SEER,” Member
- Florida Bar Association, Member
- Palm Beach County Bar Association, Member

## Honors and Distinctions

- *Chambers USA*, 2008-2024, Ranked in New York for Environment
- *Lawdragon*, 2025, Listed as Hall of Fame for Real Estate
- *Lawdragon*, 2021, 2023-2024, Listed in the “Lawdragon 500 Leading U.S. Environmental & Energy Lawyer Guide” for Environmental Law & Litigation
- *The Legal 500*, 2014, 2016, Recommended for Real Estate & Construction - Real Estate
- *Best Lawyers*, 2016-2025, Listed in New York for Environmental Law, Litigation - Environmental, and Land Use and Zoning Law
- *Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2015-2023, Listed in New York for Environmental
- *Who’s Who Legal*, Listed for Environment Law, 2020, 2022-2023

## Published Work and Lectures

- [Pratt’s Energy Law Report](#), Lexis Nexis, Author, “WOTUS, SCOTUS, and POTUS—Act III (Or Is it Act IV?), July-August 2023, Vol. 23-7
- Akerman Real Estate Presentation, Presenter, “Akerman Hosts Virtual Seminar Series: Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning Webinar - Seminar Four,” December 16, 2021
- Akerman Real Estate Presentation, Presenter, “Akerman Hosts Virtual Seminar Series: Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning Webinar,” September 9, 2021
- [2019 Akerman U.S. Real Estate Sector Report](#), Contributor
- [2018 Akerman U.S. Real Estate Sector Report](#), Contributor
- *New York Law Journal*, Author, “Waters of the United States Rule: Posturing and Litigation Continue, But the Substance Has Yet to Be Addressed,” April 27, 2018