

People



**James H. McNeil Jr.**

Chair, Residential Development Practice

Orlando

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vCard

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Jim McNeil serves as chair of Akerman’s Residential Development Practice, a highly experienced team representing national builders and developers of master planned and mixed-use residential communities throughout the real estate development process.

Jim represents developers, homebuilders, and private equity funds throughout Florida in all phases of the acquisition, entitlement, development, and sale of property, including build-to-rent communities, golf course redevelopment, and mall acquisition/redevelopment. Jim is known for his ability to provide pragmatic, strategic, and forward-thinking planning advice. He handles both the transactional aspects of the deal as well as the due diligence and procurement of land use approvals and entitlements. In procuring development approvals for his clients, Jim negotiates complex development agreements and handles concurrency, utility, and school capacity/mitigation agreements.

Active in the community, Jim is a member of the Greater Orlando Builders Association and previously served on the Board of Directors and as the Associate Vice President.

**Notable Work**

**Florida Land Deal:** Represented developer GT USA in the purchase of 2,300 acres of land for \$165 million in Lake County, Florida, that could bring close to 3,000 homes to the Wellness Way corridor. This land deal could be the highest valued land purchase in Lake County history and one of the largest acquisitions in Florida for 2024. The deal received significant media coverage, including: *Law360*, *CoStar*, *GrowthSpotter*, and *Orlando Business Journal*.

**Florida Land Deal:** Represented developer GT USA in the sale of 518 acres, in the Wellness Way corridor, to Pulte Home Company for \$90 million that could bring close to 1,500 homes to the Wellness Way corridor. The deal received significant media coverage, including from: *Orlando Sentinel*, *Orlando Business Journal*, and *GrowthSpotter*.

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**Areas of Experience**

Residential Land Acquisitions and Development  
 Multifamily Development and Acquisitions  
 Florida Land Use and Entitlements  
 Real Estate Acquisitions and Sales  
 Environment and Natural Resources  
 Land Use and Development  
 Real Estate  
 Affordable and Workforce Housing  
 Distressed Property

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**Education**

J.D., Stetson University College of Law, 1995  
 M.S., Florida State University, Urban and Regional Planning, 1992  
 B.S., Florida State University, 1990

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**Admissions**

**Bars**

Florida

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**Related Content**

- Connect CRE Honors Four Akerman Partners with Real Estate Award  
December 12, 2024
- Akerman Represents GT USA in \$165 Million Florida Land Deal  
September 27, 2024
- Akerman Advises GT USA on \$90 Million Central Florida Land Deal with Pulte  
July 16, 2024

**Residential:** Represents numerous national homebuilders in all phases of acquisition and development of residential projects, including contract negotiation, due diligence, and obtaining land use approvals.

**Golf Course Redevelopment:** Represented clients in the acquisition, entitlement, and redevelopment of golf course properties.

**Developments of Regional Impact:** Represented 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. The six projects comprise approximately 30,313 residential units and approximately four million square feet of commercial development.

## Published Work and Lectures

- *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, Quoted, "North Port rejects petition to contract city boundaries exclude major developments," April 29, 2021
- *Law360*, Author, "Key Considerations For Build-To-Rent Developers," April 22, 2021
- 2019 Akerman U.S. Real Estate Sector Report, Contributor
- IMN Annual Real Estate Private Equity Forum on Land & Homebuilding, Moderator, "Land Use Due Diligence: The 10 Most Important Factors When Buying Land in Today's Market," April 14-15, 2015

## Affiliations

- Greater Orlando Builders Association, Associate Vice President, 2014
- City of Ocoee Planning and Zoning Commission, Past Member
- American Planning Association, Member
- Urban Land Institute (ULI), Member
- The Florida Bar, Member

## Honors and Distinctions

- *Connect CRE*, 2024 Lawyer in Real Estate Award Winner, National
- *Chambers USA*, 2022-2024, Ranked in Florida (North and Central Florida) for Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use
- *The Legal 500*, 2020, 2022-2023, Recommended for Real Estate and Construction – Land Use/Zoning and for Real Estate and Construction – Real Estate
- American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), Member
- *Best Lawyers*, 2010-2025 Listed in Florida for Real Estate Law, Land Use and Zoning Law
- *Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2012-2018, Listed in Florida for Real Estate: Business, Land Use/Zoning