

In The News

Richard G. Leland Analyzes New York's Landmark SEQRA Reforms in the *New York Real Estate Journal*

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Akerman Real Estate Practice Group Partner Richard G. Leland contributed “NY Legislature Enacts Reforms to New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)” to the *New York Real Estate Journal*, analyzing amendments to the state’s 50-year-old environmental review law recently signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul.

Rick explains that the reforms are designed to accelerate housing development by streamlining and in many cases eliminating an environmental review process long criticized for imposing substantial delays on housing and infrastructure projects. The centerpiece of the legislation is a new set of statutory exemptions removing qualifying projects from SEQRA review entirely, bypassing lead agency designation, environmental assessment forms, and environmental impact statements. The legislation also introduces mandatory time frames for agency review, a discipline the statute had never before imposed.

Rick identifies several open questions the reforms leave unresolved, including how agencies will implement the new exemptions and how environmental concerns will be addressed outside SEQRA’s established framework. He concludes that their effectiveness will depend on whether agencies can develop procedures efficient enough to advance

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housing development while clear enough to withstand public and judicial scrutiny.

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