

Peter F. Kelsen | Partner
Real Estate

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Peter Kelsen concentrates his practice in the area of land use and real estate development. Peter serves as counsel to a wide range of clients, including developers, owners, financial institutions, and municipal agencies in an equally diverse range of industries. He advises clients on the complexities of their transactions in the areas of:

- Zoning and land use law
- Real estate tax assessment/exemption litigation
- Commercial development
- Condemnation

Chambers USA has recognized Peter as a leader in real estate law, with sources noting “he is the best zoning attorney in the city.” *Chambers* has also stated that he is “highly regarded for his zoning and land use practice” and “one of the few lawyers who really understands how the city works.” Clients agree that “he has an impressive ability to achieve victory in difficult cases.” He is praised as “extremely skillful, consistently quick to respond, economical in his use of time, and very practical with respect to dealing with local government agencies.”

Peter previously served as the vice chairman of the Philadelphia Zoning Code Commission and is the editor of the *Philadelphia Zoning Code Publication Project*. He is a frequent lecturer on current trends in the practice of land use law, presenting on a variety of topics, including real estate development, eminent domain, zoning law, real estate tax assessment, and taxes affecting real estate.

Prior to entering private practice, Peter worked for the City of Philadelphia’s Law

Department in the Land Damages Division.

Select Engagements

- NFL football team as land use counsel in connection with the development of the Philadelphia football stadium and practice facility.
- World-renowned impressionist art institution as zoning counsel.
- Internationally recognized Health Care System as land use counsel.
- National developer of regional shopping centers as land use counsel.
- Real estate developers as land use counsel in connection with Philadelphia area multifamily development projects.
- State pension system in connection with the successful appeal for two major Center City, Philadelphia, office buildings resulting in significant property tax savings.
- Successful court challenge of the City of Philadelphia's 2018 Real Estate Tax Assessment Program impacting in excess of 300 properties.
- Owner/developers in successful tax assessment litigation resulting in significant property tax savings for premium office buildings located in Center City, Philadelphia.
- National mall owner/developer in securing significant real estate tax savings.
- International oil company in the successful representation of terminal and refinery facilities in securing major reductions in real estate tax assessments.
- Working with the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority ("PRA") in the acquisition and development of a large tract on Vine Street on behalf of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon church). The project involved the construction of a Mormon Temple.
- Negotiation and acquisition with the PRA in connection with a parcel at 16th & Vine for a mixed-use development on behalf of the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The project includes construction of a 300+ unit of a market-rate housing development with retail spaces and a Church Meeting House.
- Assisting nonprofit housing providers in connection with numerous ongoing development projects throughout Philadelphia.
- Major Philadelphia-based University in connection with zoning and land use advices.

Admissions

- Pennsylvania

Memberships

- American Bar Association
- Philadelphia Bar Association
- Case Western Reserve University School of Law
- City of Philadelphia
- Pennsylvania Bar Association

- Philadelphia Zoning Code Commission
- University of Pennsylvania

Education

- University of Pennsylvania, BA
- Case Western Reserve University School of Law, JD

Recognitions

- Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use Law, listed in *Chambers USA*
- AV-Preeminent®, listed by Martindale-Hubbell®
- 2023–2026, Land Use and Zoning Law and Real Estate Law in Philadelphia, listed in *Best Lawyers in America*®
- 2026, listed in *The Legal 500 U.S. City Elite*
- 2004, 2006–2019, “Pennsylvania Super Lawyer” in State, Local & Municipal, listed in *Super Lawyers*
- 2018, Best of the Bar Award, by *Philadelphia Business Journal*

Professional Activities

Peter is a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish National Fund of the Pennsylvania/New Jersey region. He served on the Board of the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation and is also a member of the Governmental Affairs Committee of the Building Industry Association.