

# Leading LAWYERS

**Legal Times Identifies The D.C. Area's  
Go-To Practitioners in Real Estate**

## Identifying **13** Leading Real Estate Lawyers

**Y**ou know the old saw: Clients hire the lawyer, not the firm. Of course, exceptions abound.

But there's also, obviously, a lot of power in the idea that clients want a trusted adviser, not necessarily the firm with the "best" reputation. Identifying individuals who are top of mind for clients is the goal of the "Leading Lawyers" series we are launching in *Legal Times* this year, beginning with real estate practitioners.

First, we solicited input from the legal and client community. We got the word out in various ways, including mailings and prominent notices within these pages. We also posted information about the series on our information Web site, [legaltimes.biz](http://legaltimes.biz).

We wanted names of go-to real estate lawyers, with practices in the D.C. area. We kept the nomination call deliberately broad because we wanted as much help as possible.

The nominations were very useful. They reaffirmed some notions we had going in about a few top lawyers, and they tipped us off to some we didn't know about.



**REAL ESTATE**  
A Special Report

At the same time, the nominations were scant research. We augmented them with old-fashioned reporting—dozens of interviews with clients, observers of the local real estate field, and other lawyers. This wasn't a popularity contest, but it was based in part on peer review. Many of the 13 lawyers we've profiled here were nowhere to be found in the nominations.

Did we omit quality real estate lawyers? Surely. As extensive as our research was, this is journalism as art, not science. Also, in our selection process, we tried to achieve diversity in geogra-

phy, practice type, and firm size. We didn't want to compile a list that was entirely big-firm lawyers, or only counsel to downtown D.C. developers. We didn't want to overlook Northern Virginia and the suburbs of Maryland. We didn't want to overlook boutique firms.

We put the assignment in the able hands of Claudia MacLachlan, a regular contributor to *Legal Times*.

—Richard Barbieri, Editor in Chief

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## Earl Segal

**Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld**

For Earl Segal at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, real estate is in the blood. His father was a commercial real estate broker in Philadelphia, where he grew up, and now his son is a lawyer with a small real estate firm outside of Philadelphia.

“In real estate work, there is a lot of opportunity for win-win,” says Segal, 55. “It’s a very rewarding practice, and I get the opportunity to work with some very smart people. We have the same goal: to get the transaction completed.

“Unlike litigation, if I win, it doesn’t mean someone else has to lose,” Segal says.

Another feature of real estate practice that Segal likes is the ability to see the fruits of his labor, and even show them off to others. “Sixty percent of what I do, I can get in the car and go look at,” he says. When his children were young, Segal would drive them around to see his projects.

Among the properties he can point to is the Judiciary Office Building adjacent to Union Station. Segal represented the architect of the Capitol about a decade ago in negotiating the financing and leasing of the building, which houses federal judicial workers. More recently, he has been representing the Food Lion grocery chain in store leasing and acquisition. He also represents

Wyndham Hotels, and has helped the Dallas-based hotel chain in nearly 100 transactions.

“Earl is one of the finest lawyers in the hospitality profession,” says Leslie Ng, who was senior vice president for mergers and acquisitions at Wyndham and now is a consultant to the company. Ng credits Segal with being thorough and easy to work with. “He’s extremely pleasant in negotiations, which creates an atmosphere conducive to getting a deal done,” says Ng, who has seen transactions sour because of lawyer spats.

Segal started practice nearly 30 years ago at Linowes and Blocher in Silver Spring, which is still a real estate powerhouse in Montgomery County that’s known for its zoning expertise. In 1986 he moved to Akin Gump, which now has 10 lawyers in its real estate practice here.

Segal recently was named general counsel to the Greater Washington Board of Trade, a prestigious vol-

unteer position with the business networking organization, founded in the late 19th century. He also recently represented Venable and Shaw Pittman in their lease negotiations.

“It’s very nice to work with people you respect,” says Segal, adding that being hired by one’s peers is a particular honor.

—Claudia MacLachlan

