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2021 Ones to Watch: Emily Melia, Attorney, Bernkopf Goodman LLP

May 28, 2021 - Spotlights

Which project, deal, or transaction was the “game-changer” in the advancement of your career? My work with one specific real estate developer in the area and my involvement with their various projects has been instrumental in shaping my experience and the way I practice. In particular, a project involving the development of an apartment tower in the downtown area of a small city was game-changing in terms of my confidence and ability to coordinate the pieces of a highly complex transaction independently and bring it to a successful close.

How do you contribute to your community or your profession? I contribute to my community by volunteering my time working with youth sports. I still find that my involvement with sports and being part of a team in my youth has shaped my ability as an adult to both take direction and act in a leadership role. I think the skills that it teaches you in terms of hard work, commitment, dedication, and teamwork can stay with you forever, and I hope to pass those lessons along to the kids in my community.

What led you to your current profession? My coursework at Amherst College sparked my interest in the law, and I have always been interested in real estate. I was lucky enough to get a job in law school with a real estate-based law firm that confirmed my desire to combine both interests into a career.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career? My first boss Steve Adelson taught me a rational and reasonable approach to law that has served me well. He taught me that, in addition to protecting a client’s interests and protecting them from liability, it is essential to understand their end goals. You can’t let your ego or desire to “win” on every minor issue stand in the way of leading them there. Know when to be a fierce advocate and when to compromise. Being able to watch his level-headed approach was a great way to start my career.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540