

# The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES 1843-2013

PHILADELPHIA, JULY 2013

An **ALM** Publication

— BEST LAW FIRM —  
CORPORATE  
PRACTICES

## Project Management

### MEYER, UNKOVIC & SCOTT HELPS CLIENTS PUT TOGETHER THE REAL ESTATE PUZZLE

By **Ben Seal**  
Of the Legal Staff

The development of a shopping center brings with it certain complications. Aligning the interests of numerous parties can be a difficult enough challenge in its own right, but once PennDOT and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources get involved, it takes expert oversight to steady the process.

Meyer, Unkovic & Scott provid-

ed that expertise in its work on McCandless Crossing, a mixed-use project 10 miles north of downtown Pittsburgh. The firm's real estate group navigated through all corners of the land's development — conveying ownership interests, working out zoning issues in a complicated district, dealing with construction problems that arose and complications with the DCNR caused by

nearby wetlands.

In the end, the nearly 1 million square feet of the project feature retail, residential and office locations, a hotel, entertainment and a town center at the heart of the development's 130 acres, all worked out by Meyer Unkovic's real estate attorneys.

"It's like a jigsaw puzzle that needs to be put together," said W. Grant Scott, chair of the group.

— FINALIST —  
REAL  
ESTATE



Laura Mares

“You need to work with the municipality and the retailers.”

The firm is especially suited to put together puzzles like McCandless Crossing because of its size and broad range of real estate practitioners. Scott’s experience with big-box retailers helped to get Lowe’s signed on as the first major lease in the project, while Kevin McKeegan’s intimate knowledge of zoning and entitlement work was critical to the process, according to Scott.

Having 19 lawyers in the real estate department, many of whom have specific expertise in different areas, allows Meyer Unkovic to put a well-suited attorney on every matter, Scott said. There is never a concern about an attorney punching above his or her weight class on a certain matter.

“Our lawyers are cross-pollinated, so when you’re looking at a

lease agreement, they know what the litigation effects of the document might be,” Scott said. “They don’t have horse blinders on.”

The firm ensures its attorneys are not just one-trick ponies by putting them through a training program that builds their strength in several facets of real estate law. McKeegan might be the firm’s go-to zoning lawyer, but he’s not the only one who can handle such matters.

Meyer Unkovic’s breadth of knowledge worked in client Faros Properties’ favor when it successfully bid for the purchase of the Washington Plaza luxury apartments in downtown Pittsburgh. The 24-story, I.M. Pei-designed building presented a challenge because a straightforward conveyance could have triggered undesired tax increases.

McKeegan, Robert Mauro and Sarah Reigle, who also worked on the McCandless Crossing project, put to use the firm’s general corporate experience and familiarity with governmental agencies in Pittsburgh to structure the transaction as a sale of ownership interests in upstream entities.

In the past two years, Meyer Unkovic also helped client Circleville Road Partners in the \$100 million development of The Heights at State

**‘When you add value to transactions, people want to use you. Clients don’t like surprises, so we try to bill accordingly.’**

— Grant Scott

College, a nearly 150-acre student housing community in Ferguson Township. The firm obtained master plan approval despite significant opposition from several anti-student-housing factions in the community.

Meyer Unkovic is able to satisfy clients — and keep some of them around for nearly three decades — by providing them with a thorough knowledge base and lower rates than many of its competitors.

“When you add value to transactions, people want to use you,” Scott said. “Clients don’t like surprises, so we try to bill accordingly.”

With a combination of midsized-firm pricing and large-firm service, Meyer Unkovic’s real estate department keeps clients coming back. •

## Meyer Unkovic’s Firmwide Real Estate Department

19	Department Size (Headcount)
35	Department as Percent of Firm (Headcount)
30	Department as Percent of Firm (Revenue)

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