

NORTH CAROLINA
LAWYERS WEEKLY

POWER LIST 2022

R E A L E S T A T E

The Power List recognizes the most respected and accomplished attorneys in an area of practice—a lawyer you might call yourself if you needed legal help in his or her field.



"Helping lawyers practice better,
more efficiently, and more profitably."

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POWER
LIST 2022
REAL ESTATE

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From the editor

CONGRATS TO THE REAL ESTATE ATTORNEYS POWER LIST HONOREES

Anyone who has tried to buy a home lately (me included) knows how challenging the residential real estate market is across the U.S., at least if you're a buyer. North Carolina is no exception. Attorneys are on the frontlines of navigating the seemingly endless sea of paperwork associated with buying a home. That's become a much more streamlined process thanks to technology (it's at least one area of life that technology has simplified rather than make more complicated), but the legal issues remain the same. Someone has to read through all that fine print.

Commercial real estate poses its own set of challenges for attorneys. The Covid-19 pandemic did its part to amplify those. Office and retail sectors, having felt the brunt of an evolving workplace and businesses being forced to close their doors during the pandemic, have slowly begun to rebound nationally.

"Following close to two years of pandemic-driven correction, signs of stabilization emerged in the second half of 2021, with positive net absorption for two successive quarters," Colliers stated in a post on its website detailing its Q1 commercial real estate report. It continued: "However, the market took a pause in Q1 2022. Absorption was slightly negative at -534,000 square feet, while vacancy ticked up by 20 basis points to 15%. These modest changes are not seen as indicative of a downturn in the market. Stabilization is set to continue as more employees return to the office in the second and third quarters."

Stay tuned.

Inside these pages you'll meet several North Carolina-based lawyers with a front-row seat to the state's real estate scene — commercial and residential, with our real estate attorneys Power List.

This list is by no means scientific, nor is it all-encompassing. It was compiled by North Carolina Lawyers Weekly staff based on web research. You'll notice some involve Q&S with honorees; others do not. We felt those that didn't return their Q&S were still worthy of recognition, so we included them on the list.

We'll be publishing Power Lists in upcoming editions of North Carolina Lawyers Weekly. So if you know of an attorney making an impact at the office and in the community, drop me an email.

In the meantime, does anyone have a home for sale?

Jason Thomas is the interim editor of North Carolina Lawyers Weekly. Reach him via email at jthomas@scbiznews.



TONY BARWICK

PARTNER, BROOKS PIERCE
RALEIGH, N.C.



Tony Barwick, a partner at Brooks Pierce in Raleigh, focuses on commercial real estate transactions. He is a member of the Raleigh/Durham Chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth and the Urban Land Institute. He earned both his bachelor’s degree and law degree from the University of North Carolina.

On the firm’s website, Barwick wrote that he approaches practicing law the way he played sports, inspired by teamwork and collaboration, with a willingness to build consensus, lead and succeed.

“Practicing law frequently ends in intangible results,” he wrote. “But it’s the moments of tangible success that I especially enjoy, whether that is seeing a new business created or another business sold after years of investment, planning and execution.”

He considers among his top accomplishments his long-standing client relationships and professional relationships in the legal community and within his firm.

“I work with a great team of transactional and commercial real estate lawyers and other professionals that has steadily grown in size and experience levels,” he said.

He credits his success to the client loyalty he has cultivated over his 20 years of practicing law.

“My clients know many lawyers, but few are as dedicated and caring about their interest as I have strived to be,” he said. “I have many loyal clients, and in turn they have my utmost dedication and loyalty to them.”

Barwick believes if there is a career better than law, he has not found it yet.

“It is hard to imagine doing something else, and I always said if I could find something better than what I am doing now I would do it, but I have never been motivated to look very hard,” he said. “If I had to guess, I would say I would be a small business owner - maybe running a restaurant or running fishing charters at the coast.”

SUSAN R. BENOIT

PARTNER, HUTCHENS LAW FIRM
FAYETTEVILLE, N.C.



Fayetteville attorney Susan R. Benoit is the supervising partner with Hutchens Law Firm’s real estate and real estate owned property department in Fayetteville.

With extensive experience in real estate transactions, Benoit started her law career as a paralegal and loan processor before going to law school.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and government from Campbell University and earned her law degree from Campbell University School of Law.

As a partner at Hutchens Law Firm, Benoit puts her experience to work growing the firm’s estate transaction practice. She has overseen the tremendous growth in the real estate department in both the number of closings the firm handles each year and the number of local closing offices.

Benoit is actively involved with the Mortgage Bankers Association of Fayetteville, Longleaf Pine REALTORS, Inc. (formerly Fayetteville Regional Association of REALTORS), and the Home Builders Association of Fayetteville.

She has served on the Planning Committee for the Fayetteville Walk to End Alzheimer’s for several years. She also serves on the Paralegal Advisory Board for Fayetteville Technical Community College.

Benoit is a member of the Cumberland County Bar Association, the North Carolina Bar Association I Real Property Section, and was appointed by the North Carolina secretary of state to serve on the North Carolina Electronic Mortgage Closing Advisory Committee.

TREY BRIGHT

MANAGING PARTNER, CKEZEPIS & BRIGHT LAW
HUNTERSVILLE, N.C.



Born and raised in North Carolina, Trey Bright found his calling at the intersection of business and politics.

He earned undergraduate degrees in business administration and political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and continued on at the UNC School of Law where he received his law degree and was managing editor of the First Amendment Law Review.

He started his career at an international law firm in Charlotte, where he represented clients in a variety of financial transactions.

As managing partner at Ckezepis & Bright Law in Huntersville, Bright says he enjoys being part of a team that has built forward-thinking processes which allow his firm to deliver individualized care to each of its clients in a timely way.

“Whether it is our mobile closing offering, our online scheduler or our title analysis framework, everything the firm has built is with client service and convenience in mind,” he said.

Good listening skills make Bright a successful lawyer.

“Thinking back to law school, one answer to the issue at hand can almost certainly be found by parsing through the relevant statute or case law,” he said, and added that one of the hardest aspects to this approach is knowing where to start.

“In my opinion, it starts with listening to the client and putting yourself in their shoes,” he said. “Our office understands that the transactions we work on are so often a significant moment in a client’s life – taking the time to listen to and connect with our clients makes the job that much more rewarding.”

If pursuing a career as a lawyer had not been Bright’s calling, he might have followed in his father’s footsteps and become a dentist in his hometown of Fayetteville.

“While I would have loved to work alongside my father, and I know we have all heard plenty of lawyer jokes, nobody likes going to the dentist,” he said.

NACHAEL BRIGHT

PARTNER, K&L GATES
CHARLOTTE, N.C.



Nachael Bright is a partner in K&L Gates’ Charlotte office. She joined the firm in 2012 and focuses on real estate, refinance, restructuring and insolvency.

Representing institutional lenders, finance companies and loan portfolio servicers in secured and unsecured financial transactions, including real estate financings, loan assumptions and syndicated financings, Bright also has experience in general corporate transactions and commercial leasing.

Bright is active in the Mortgage Bankers Association, Commercial Real Estate Finance Council and is a member of the Real Property Section of the North Carolina Bar Association.

Prior to joining K&L Gates, she was a partner in the Global Finance & Debt Products Group of Alston & Byrd of Charlotte.

She earned both her bachelor’s degree and law degree from the University of North Carolina and is active in the Mortgage Bankers Association, the Commercial Real Estate Finance Council, Commercial Real Estate Women and both the North Carolina Bar Association and the American Bar Association.

K&L Gates prides itself on its large diversified real estate practice with lawyers around the world. The fully integrated firm includes lawyers working across disciplines and offices to provide a full range of services on local, national, and international transactions and projects. The firm focuses on commercial ownership, leasing and management, economic incentives, real estate acquisitions and dispositions, real estate finance, distressed real estate, land use, planning, and zoning; real estate planning and development; real estate joint ventures.

Bright and her colleagues are available to guide clients through complex transactions, enabling them to fully capitalize on real estate investment opportunities.

THE POWER LIST

ELIZABETH CRAMER
PARTNER, GOOSEMANN ROSE COLVARD & CRAMER
ASHEVILLE, N.C.



Elizabeth Cramer is known for her skill in navigating challenging projects in both commercial and residential real estate.

From representing investors in the acquisition and development of industrial parks to working with first-time homebuyers, builders, lenders and others in the real estate sector, she takes a multi-faceted approach to her practice.

Cramer joined the Asheville law firm of Goosemann Rose Colvard & Cramer in 2007 and was named a partner three years later.

She is a native of Ohio and moved to Asheville by way of Colorado.

Cramer received her Bachelor of Arts degree in International Business from Davis & Elkins College in West Virginia and her law degree from the Appalachian School of Law where she was editor-in-chief of the Appalachian Journal of Law and graduated magna cum laude.

Her efforts to help a business owners and investors during the 2008 recession stand out among her top professional accomplishments.

“Shortly after being licensed to practice law, the Great Recession occurred,” she said. “So, I formed and developed my practice in times that demanded unique, creative and unconventional real estate and financing structure and transactions.”

When the market improved, she was able to develop her practice in more conventional commercial and residential real estate, she added.

Cramer says her sharp analytical abilities help her stand out and make her a successful attorney.

“I can quickly absorb and sort facts and details, assess and then formulate the legal options and strategies,” she said.

Before setting her sights on a career in law, Cramer thought she might become a doctor.

“I do think I would be a good doctor because I like to learn and have good memorization skills plus, I am calm natured under pressure,” she said “I also love travel, so I could see myself opening a travel resort in Tanzania or somewhere amazing.”

MICHELE LYNN ENGLISH
PARTNER, MAITLAND AND ENGLISH LAW FIRM
CHAPEL HILL, N.C.



At Maitland and English Law Firm in Chapel Hill, partner Michele Lynn English focuses on real estate law, wills, trusts, and estates, taxation, elder law and family law.

She has served as head of the firm’s real estate department since 2017.

English earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Coastal Carolina University in Conway, S.C., graduating cum laude. She received a Master of Laws In Taxation from the University of Florida Fredric G. Levin College of Law in Gainesville, and her law degree, cum laude, from Florida A&M University College of Law in Orlando.

At Maitland & English Law Firm, English prides herself on providing personalized solutions to her clients for a wide range of legal issues. She also advises clients on current tax and estate planning laws and strategies.

English is professionally associated with the North Carolina State Bar (2011 to present); the Orange County Bar Association, (2012 to present, where she previously served as president); and the 18th Judicial District Bar (2012 to present).

Maitland & English also practices elder law, estate planning and administration, family law, contract review and business formations.

LAURIE GENGO
PARTNER, TRIANGLE LAW GROUP
RALEIGH, N.C.



Laurie Gengo admits she was nervous when she started her own law firm 14 years ago, but the success she has enjoyed makes the hard work worthwhile.

“This was something I dreamed about for many years, but was always fearful of doing,” she said. “Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have just celebrated my 14th anniversary, and this experience has been one of most stressful yet satisfying things I have ever done.”

A native of Jamestown, N.Y., Gengo received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the State University of New York at Geneseo, graduating summa cum laude. She earned her law degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she was also a doctoral student in political science, and served as an instructor. She is a licensed real estate broker and owns Trilogy Real Estate Group. She is also co-owner of several real estate investment companies.

At Triangle Law Group, Gengo handles complex litigation and a variety of other matters, including homeowner’s association issues, business law, real estate law, landlord tenant issues in both residential and commercial contexts, contract matters, and licensing issues for general contractors and real estate brokers.

In her spare time, she is a visual artist and enjoys supporting Second Chance Pet Adoptions. She also is a supporter of the National Comedy Center located in Jamestown, her hometown.

Gengo enjoys using her analytical skills alongside her creativity to design solutions for her clients.

“By using both sides of my brain, I am able to craft-outside-the-box solutions to our clients’ legal problems, and this is something they have appreciated over the years,” she said.

If Gengo were not an attorney, this animal lover might have become a veterinarian, but she admits her strength is not in science. She does plan to focus on art in the future.

“I have been a visual artist most of my life on the side and will be pursuing this as a second career when I retire from the practice of law,” she said.

WILLIAM N. HARRIS
PARTNER, MCGUIREWOODS
CHARLOTTE, N.C.



William Harris focuses his practice on commercial real estate development, including the acquisition, development, financing and disposition of office, retail and other commercial properties. He also assists businesses with commercial leases and non-real estate clients with real estate aspects of acquisition transactions.

He is a partner at McGuireWoods, and practices in the firm’s Charlotte office.

A Morehead Scholar, he graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and earned his law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law.

He has served on the KinderMourn board of directors since 2011 and has served on the Brain Tumor Advisory Board at Duke University Medical Center for 26 years.

Harris considers building a real estate practice team in McGuireWoods’ Charlotte office as among his firm’s top accomplishments.

“We’ve been able to leverage the rich tradition of our Charlotte legacy firms to put in place a practice group with diverse skills and approaches to further the firm’s overall mission,” he said.

Across his career he has represented developers in connection with the acquisition, financing, development, leasing, and sale of retail power centers and single tenant retail facilities. He also represented business tenants in negotiations for office and warehouse leases, including one business tenant regarding a substantial office lease involving over 200,000 square feet of space.

He attributes his successful practice to his tenacity.

“It takes a mix of energy and patience on top of the basic legal expertise to thrive in a fast-moving practice,” he said. “Showing up and staying engaged pays off in the long run.”

If Harris had not followed his career path into the legal profession, he might have become a teacher.

“I can’t think of a better way to influence the future of our country than by instilling skills and inspiring excellence in our young people,” he said.

THOMAS R. HOLT

MANAGING SHAREHOLDER, BAGWELL HOLT SMITH
CHAPEL HILL, N.C.



Thomas R. Holt, managing shareholder in Bagwell Holt Smith, has been with the firm for over 30 years, anchoring the Southern Village office location in Chapel Hill.

He primarily focuses on residential and commercial real estate transactions.

A Pennsylvania native, Holt moved south to get his education. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Davis and Elkins College in Elkins, W.Va., and spent several years in the field of social work before moving to Chapel Hill where he enrolled in the University of North Carolina School of Law and earned his law degree in 1990.

His social work background and soothing demeanor in closings have proven valuable in helping clients navigate important and at times stressful financial transactions. Clients call him the ultimate professional, with sage advice and a calming manner to help clients achieve closure in their real estate transactions.

Holt is devoted to community service, serving on the Chapel Hill Public Library Foundation board. He volunteers with the North Carolina Lawyers Assistance Program of the North Carolina State Bar and in 2013 received the Chief Justices LAP Award.

When he's not helping clients, he is spending time with his family, fishing when he can, and always fiercely following the Tar Heels.

DAVID IACUZIO

PARTNER, HOLLAND & KNIGHT
CHARLOTTE, N.C.



David Iacuzio, a real estate finance attorney and partner based in Holland & Knight's Charlotte office, represents lending institutions, borrowers, servicing groups and joint venture parties.

His experience with real estate loan transactions, property acquisition and refinancing, loan workouts and pledge fund formation is reflected in his many successes.

Most recently, Iacuzio represented lenders in connection with a variety of real estate loan transactions ranging in size up to \$7 billion, including origination of mortgage, mezzanine, debtor-in-possession and construction loans, loan splitting, participations, loan sales and acquisitions.

He also represented borrowers in connection with property acquisition and refinancing of current loans, and assisted servicing groups in connection with loan workouts, loan restructurings, assumptions, defeasance payoffs, extensions, partial property releases and related matters.

Iacuzio is a graduate of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics and psychology. He earned his law degree from Suffolk University Law School in Boston, graduating cum laude.



CONGRATULATIONS
JENNIFER SCOTT
General Counsel
POWER PLAYER

NC Lawyers Weekly
Top 25 Most Influential
Real Estate Attorneys

JEREMIAH JACKSON

ATTORNEY & FOUNDER, JACKSON LAW
WAKE FOREST, N.C.



Having practiced for the last decade, Jeremiah Jackson has experienced the ups and downs of the real estate business.

He focuses his practice primarily on residential real estate, forming corporate entities for ownership of real estate, representing lenders, handling real estate purchases and refinancees, construction transactions, acquisitions, title curative work, and contract drafting.

In addition to real estate, the law firm handles estate planning, business planning, probate and estates planning and administration, and short sales.

Jackson is a native North Carolinian, born and raised in Carolina Beach and has lived in the Triangle

area since 1996.

He graduated with honors from North Carolina State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science with a concentration in law and political philosophy. and earned his law degree from the University of North Carolina School of Law.

AYSHA JOHNSON

ATTORNEY, COSTNER LAW OFFICE
GREENSBORO, N.C.



Aysha Johnson, an attorney in the Costner Law Office in Greensboro, blends business with law to create a successful real estate law practice.

A graduate of George Mason University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in legal studies, Johnson earned her MBA and law degree from Elon University.

She found her way to real estate law as a student at Elon where she volunteered to help low income homeowners, referred to the clinic by Habitat for Humanity and Legal Aid of North Carolina, prepare estate planning documents. She has been a practicing attorney for three years and considers her development as a real estate attorney and leader as one of her top professional accomplishments.

“While I am still young in my professional career, I’ve learned a lot about real estate transactions and real estate law,” she said. “I love that I can learn from my team and they can learn from me.”

She believes her ability to relate to people makes her a successful attorney.

“In my role, working in a high-volume firm, it can be easy to look at each matter as just another file and each client as just another client,” she said. “I take pride in trying to give each client a personalized experience.”

Johnson says she loves her career as an attorney, but if she could choose a different path, she would be an event planner.

“I’ve always loved planning events and coordinating every single detail, so guests have a great experience,” she said. “I’m sure it’s stressful, but it also seems like a lot of fun.”

TODD A. JONES

FOUNDING PARTNER, ANDERSON JONES
RALEIGH, N.C.



Todd A. Jones is an attorney and founding partner with Anderson Jones who has extensive experience in many areas of law, including real estate and construction law. He has handled cases ranging from workers’ compensation to personal injury to multi-million-dollar contract disputes.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree in public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned his law degree from Campbell University School of Law.

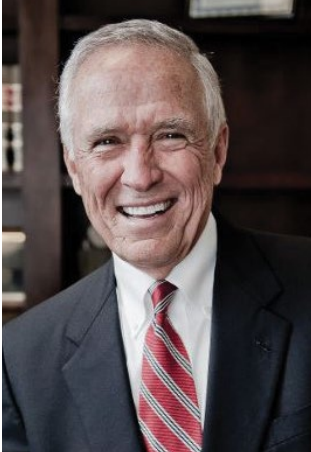
Jones is an active volunteer with the North Carolina Bar Association’s Construction Law Section. In 2007, he received the Blanchard Outstanding Young Lawyers Award by the NCBA for his work on law-related education for North Carolina schoolchildren ranging from elementary school to high school.

Jones has served as a member of the Downtown Housing Improvement Corp. for six years and currently serves as the organization’s board chair. He also serves on the Construction Financial Managers Association’s National Government Affairs Committee, on the Association of Builders and Contractors’ Fayetteville Council and chairs the Campbell Law Alumni Association Board of Directors. He is also a frequent speaker at association and conference meetings on a national level.

In May 2012, Jones traveled with the International Section’s delegation to Lithuania and Latvia and represented North Carolina lawyers internationally, facilitating the Attorney Exchange Program between the Lithuanian Lawyers Association and the North Carolina Bar Association.

WALTER JONES

FOUNDING PARTNER, JONES CHILDERS DONALDSON WEBB
MOORESVILLE, N.C.



A founding member of Jones Childers Donaldson Webb, Walter Jones began practicing with T.C. Homesley, Jr. in 1970. The current firm evolved from that early partnership.

Jones began his practice in civil and criminal litigation and was a member of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers and the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. In recent years, he has practiced primarily in the areas of estate planning and estate administration, corporate and business transactional law, commercial and residential real estate law and contract law.

He attributes his accomplishments and longevity in practice to his staff professionals and his wife.

“I had the good luck to have wonderful paralegals at the heart of our firm,” he said. “And my wonderful wife never complained about my long hours.”

Growing up in eastern North Carolina, Jones earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received his law degree from the Wake Forest University School of Law. He served in the United States Army, where he was a member of the JAG Corps, serving at Fort Jackson, S.C., and in Vietnam, from 1966 to 1970. While in the Army, he earned the Army Commendation Medal and the Bronze Star Medal.

Jones is a long-time member and associate of the board of directors of Hospice and Palliative Care of Iredell County, having served as chairman and counsel to the board. He currently serves on the board and was recently named an advocate member, which is a lifetime honor of recognition. He was the attorney for the Mooresville Graded School District from 1985-2000 and serves the Town of Mooresville’s attorney from 2000-2002.

He was inducted into the NC Bar Association General Practice Hall of Fame in June 2008.

Jones believes a successful law practice is a reflection of how attorneys treat their clients.

“I have always felt our clients were entitled to our best work, regardless of their cases and position in life,” he said.

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BEN KUHN
PARTNER, RAGSDALE LIGGETT
RALEIGH, N.C.



For 25 years, Ben Kuhn has practiced real estate law in Raleigh, focusing on real estate development, land use and zoning matters.

A partner at Ragsdale Liggett, Kuhn represents clients in a wide variety of commercial real estate transactions, including the acquisition, development, leasing, disposition, and financing of all types of commercial properties. As lead counsel, he has helped hundreds of clients throughout North Carolina pursue and complete construction of both residential and commercial projects.

Kuhn received his bachelor's degree from UNC, Charlotte and his law degree from Temple University School of Law.

Representing real people facing serious real estate problems is one of his greatest rewards. One such problem involved a local landfill.

"I represented a neighborhood in the Sandhills area about 10 years ago when they faced the prospect of a developer turning an old sand mine into a landfill with a proposed waste footprint that would accept trash from all 100 counties in North Carolina and about half of South Carolina," he said. "That is devastating when it is directly adjacent to your back yard."

Kuhn and his team had less than two weeks to prepare, while the developer had secured non-disclosure agreements from local government planners and leaders allowing them to complete large notebooks of support and expert testimony.

The residents impacted rallied, and their support led to a successful outcome.

"Neighbors came together. They organized. They raised funds to pay legal fees, and in the end, we were successful in helping the community oppose the landfill which was denied," Kuhn said. "The experience taught me the importance of the work I do and how it can help people," he added.

Kuhn attributes his success to being persistent and paying attention to clients.

"It is important to return phone calls and e-mails promptly," he said. "Be responsive, but also pro-active and seek answers where conflict arises to find solutions that work for your client."

ZENO LANCASTER
OWNER, LANCASTER LAW FIRM
ASHEVILLE, N.C.



Zeno Lancaster has been practicing over 10 years and has owned Lancaster Law Firm of Asheville since 2014. He grew up nearby in Canton.

Lancaster obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and earned his law degree from Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville, Fla.

Lancaster, whose comes from a family of local business owners, says he loves working with people in western North Carolina.

"As a result, my practice is very client friendly," he says. "I know what it takes to make the folks I work with happy, and I want to earn your business."

He says his firm's mission is to protect client interests and provide them with the support during their real estate transactions.

JOHN LIVINGSTON
PARTNER, KILPATRICK TOWNSEND
RALEIGH, N.C.



John Livingston has been called one of the Triangle's most influential real estate attorneys. He is a partner and chairs the Real Estate and Development Team at Kilpatrick Townsend in Raleigh. Livingston devotes his practice to sustainable development, including mixed-use, LEED certified, and renewable energy projects.

An active community leader, Livingston is a board member for the Center for Energy Education, a center for renewable energy research, education, and workforce development for Halifax County and Eastern North Carolina. He is also a member of the Research Triangle Chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP). He possesses drive and passion for his work, both civic and professional, and he brings the same level of intelligence and enthusiasm to the community organizations he serves as he does to the practice of law.

Livingston earned his law degree from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Law, Order of the Coif, and his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, graduating cum laude, from the University of Florida.

For Livingston, being named his firm's Real Estate Investment and Development Team leader is one of his top professional accomplishments.

"Today, we have 19 amazing attorneys and paralegals practicing from locations throughout the Southeast, representing clients throughout the world," he said.

He attributes his success to his diligence.

"I strive to put as much or more effort and attention to our client's transactions and issues as I would on my own and am as invested in their success within their organization and industry as I am in my own," he said.

Livingston followed a career path he's passionate about, but if he were not a lawyer, he might be a real estate developer.

"I have a civil engineering degree and a passion for creating unique places," he said. "I have traveled extensively and have seen that there are substantial lifestyle and health benefits resulting from good development, and negative impacts from bad development."

CARMEN JOSEPH MARZELLA
FOUNDER AND MANAGING PARTNER, MARZELLA LAW GROUP
CARY, N.C.



Carmen Joseph Marzella, founder and Managing Partner of the Marzella Law Group in Cary, focuses his practice on providing legal counsel to small and mid-sized businesses, concentrating on franchising, purchase and sale of business, commercial transactions, partnerships and joint ventures and commercial leasing, and commercial real estate.

With his diverse background in business and restaurant development, commercial litigation, complex commercial transactions, stock and asset sales and acquisitions, complex commercial real estate transactions, real estate development and project finance, Marzella is frequently consulted on the succession of a closely held or family business, estates, estate planning and trusts.

Marzella also provides counsel to franchisees in a variety of industries on the formation, operation and expansion of their business networks, franchise related disputes, financing and franchise sales and acquisitions.

He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in economics from Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, N.J., and earned his law degree at Seton Hall University School of Law in South Orange, N.J.

In addition to his professional credentials, Marzella was a multi-unit franchise owner of Dunkin' Donuts / Baskin Robbins stores and has served on the Dunkin Brands Brand Advisory Council as the combo-store representative. He has also served on the Dunkin' Donuts Regional Advisory Council for the Southeast Region.

DELEON “DEE” PARKER JR.

ATTORNEY, THE PARKER LAW OFFICE
ROCKY MOUNT, N.C.



DeLeon “Dee” Parker Jr. grew up in Rocky Mount, where he is the owner and attorney at The Parker Law Office, which he opened in 2005.

He focuses his practice on both residential and commercial real estate and as well as the title work and closings for right of way acquisitions for the N.C. Department of Transportation.

After receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from N.C. State University, Parker earned his law degree from Campbell University and moved back home to Rocky Mount to serve as general counsel at Inco, a family-owned construction and industrial maintenance company.

He considers perseverance as a characteristic that has contributed to his success.

“Perseverance helps me focus on developing myself and those around me so that we can continually improve and serve our clients better each day,” he said.

Of all Parker’s accomplishments, mentoring others has brought him the greatest satisfaction.

“When I worked in-house, I started and shepherded apprenticeship and training programs for employees in industry,” he said. “In my private practice, the training and development is more hands-on, but the successes are the same.”

Parker recalls a former employee at the construction company who resisted learning how to use a computer, but finally gave in and took classes at the local community college.

“I received one of my greatest honors when he thanked me for twisting his arm to become computer literate,” Parker said. “When the employee had become unable to do the physical work his job required, he could still use his knowledge and a computer, which enabled him to continue working much longer than he would have otherwise been able.

“I can’t think of a greater career success than that,” Parker said.

JASON M. PELTZ

MANAGING PARTNER, WORLEY & PELTZ
ASHEVILLE, N.C.



Jason M. Peltz attributes his firm’s success to the long-term relationships the attorneys have with their clients.

“Whether individuals have confidence in us to represent them in buying and selling their homes, or companies entrust us with multiple commercial projects and developments, we are proud our clients and referral sources trust us with their needs,” he said.

Peltz is the managing partner of Worley & Peltz of Asheville.

For over a decade, his practice has focused on issues related to real property law, including residential and commercial closings and leases, creditor’s rights, foreclosures, and select commercial litigation matters. Clients include individuals, local, regional, and international banks and corporations.

Originally from Missouri, Peltz graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature. He received his law degree from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem.

He opened the Peltz Law Firm PLLC in 2007.

Peltz is a founding member of the United Way Highlands Circle and was a two-term member of the 28th Judicial District Executive Committee. A graduate of Leadership Asheville Class 31, he also teaches courses on real property law, creditor’s rights and foreclosures.

He credits his mentors for instilling the qualities that make him a successful attorney.

“I was fortunate to have experienced and respected attorneys give me their time and advice from the moment I started practicing in Asheville,” he said. “In addition to teaching me the nuts and bolts of real property law, they consistently reminded me that an attorney may know a lot about the law, but it is only through listening to the client that the attorney knows how to apply this knowledge.”

Peltz says his dream job would be as manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, but admits if he had not gone into law, he might have become a professor.

“The opportunity to earn a living by studying every aspect of a particular subject and share that knowledge with a group of students is appealing,” he said.

JENNIFER SCOTT

SPECIAL COUNSEL, SHIPMAN & WRIGHT
GENERAL COUNSEL, THE WINDJAM COMPANIES/ WILMINGTON, N.C.



Jennifer Scott is a busy attorney. As a special counsel at Shipman & Wright of Wilmington, she represents developers and contractors, Realtors and real estate firms, and association boards, property managers, brokers and agencies.

Scott is a dual-certified real property specialist. She has served on the N.C. Bar Association Zoning, Planning and land Use Council, the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority, and the Research Triangle Regional Partnership.

She sits on the NC State Banking Commission and recently became full time in-house counsel to The Windjam Companies, a real estate development company with a presence in the Triangle and throughout eastern North

Carolina.

A graduate of UNC-CH, Scott has a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. She continued her education at UNC where she earned her law degree. She has a graduate banking degree and executive leadership certification from The Wharton School of Business.

Scott counts among her top career successes raising a family while pursuing additional education and credentials. She has also successfully followed her career’s winding path.

“I have transitioned from private practice to in-house counsel twice now, requiring a shift of focus and skills,” she said. “I closed my practice during a difficult time in my family, went in-house with a publicly traded bank and worked through an adult extension program to get my banking finance and executive leadership credentials from The Wharton School.”

She credits her responsiveness to clients among the characteristics that make her a successful attorney. She also believes her ability to help clients shift their perspectives often leads to the best results and superior client satisfaction.

“Whether it’s a straight negotiation or a complex conflict, guiding my clients to think about things in a different way, dispense with their bias about the other players involved or the subject matter, and help them be creative about outcomes, helps get deals done and resolve disputes to the benefit of their physical/mental and fiscal health,” she said.

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JENNIFER SCOTT
Special Counsel
POWER PLAYER

NC Lawyers Weekly Top 25 Most Influential
Real Estate Attorneys

THE POWER LIST

LAURIE STEGALL
FOUNDER AND MANAGING PARTNER, STEGALL & CLIFFORD
GREENSBORO, N.C.



Over the past 29 years, Laurie Stegall has enjoyed a wide and varied legal career. From insurance defense to representing plaintiffs in workers’ compensation matters, Stegall eventually parlayed her extensive experience into a thriving residential real estate practice.

She opened Stegall & Clifford in 2014 and practices alongside her law partner Brian Clifford and three other attorneys. In addition to real estate law, Stegall provides estate planning services for her clients.

Stegall considers her law firm one of her top professional accomplishments during her career.

“I take pride in starting Stegall & Clifford and building it into a successful firm with a culture that emphasizes our family-like atmosphere and the value we place upon our staff, our referral partners, and our clients,” she said.

A Greensboro native, Stegall graduated from Guilford College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. She went on to earn her law degree at the University of North Carolina while clerking for an insurance defense firm in Greensboro and a general practitioner in Burlington.

She is a published author and member of the North Carolina Bar Association. She has coached Mock Trial teams for Northwest High School and Classical Conversations.

Stegall attributes her success to tenacity and persistence.

“I have a strong work ethic and refuse to quit in difficult circumstances,” she said.

Stegall says if she had not become an attorney, she says she might have entered academia and become a college history professor.

NIKHIL VYAS
OWNER/MANAGING PARTNER, VYAS REALTY LAW
RALEIGH, N.C.



Nikhil Vyas began his professional career after law school at a volume-driven real estate law firm. Since becoming owner and managing partner of Vyas Realty Law in Raleigh, he has been focused on developing his skills as he grows his commercial and residential practice.

Vyas has represented buyers and sellers in commercial real estate transactions valued up to \$10 million, including the acquisition and disposition of undeveloped land, multi-family and mixed-use developments, retail shopping centers and many other establishments. He also represents developers, investors, brokers, and lenders on an on-going basis as outside counsel.

After receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in business management from Virginia Commonwealth University, Vyas earned his law degree from Wake Forest University School of Law.

In 2019, two years after starting his firm, Vyas completed a brand rebuild.

“In an aggressive effort to grow our firm and relocate the main office, we underwent a hasty acquisition of a retiring attorney’s practice,” he said. “The acquisition did not lead to favorable results for my employees and then-existing clients, but the core of my firm remained intact and by my side for a reboot.”

Through the hardships, the firm emerged stronger than ever, which makes Vyas feel good about the time and energy he invested.

“I am proud to have overcome various professional struggles throughout my young career and view every forthcoming interaction as an opportunity to grow,” he said.

Accountability is a hallmark of a successful attorney, Vyas says, and adds that he takes pride in the many opportunities he has had to expand his practice areas, and the lessons that have taught him to be cautious and ask questions.

“Holding myself accountable to exceeding my own expectations and those my clients deserve has kept me vigilant on the quest to becoming a better attorney,” he said. “I am committed to not making the same mistakes twice, and to continually raise the industry standards whenever possible.”

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JOSH WHITAKER

FOUNDING MEMBER, MANAGING PARTNER, WHITAKER & HAMER
GARNER, N.C.



A founding member of Whitaker & Hamer, Josh Whitaker started the firm in 2004 with his friend, now judge, Damion McCullers. Whitaker’s practice includes residential and commercial real estate and business transactions.

Whitaker & Hamer has grown from one office to seven across the Triangle area and reaches even further into Gastonia and Goldsboro. To date, the firm has handled over 62,000 closings.

Whitaker is a Raleigh native who grew up in Garner. He received his bachelor’s degree from North Carolina State University and his law degree from Campbell University’s Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law.

Staff longevity is a hallmark of Whitaker’s practice.

“Our law firm is fortunate to have experienced very little turnover in staff since we started the firm in 2004,” he said. “Our top professional success is helping create an environment in which attorneys, paralegals and staff feel safe, valued and comfortable.”

He also takes pride in his firm’s involvement with Habitat of Wake County.

“We handle closings for buyers working with Habitat for Humanity, and that has been very rewarding,” he said.

Whitaker points to his colleagues and team at his firm when he mentions the attributes that have made him a successful attorney.

“I couldn’t imagine doing what I have done without the professional, highly-educated staff that surround me every day,” he said.

Recently, Whitaker has been creating a radio show and podcast with Joe Hamer, his law partner. They call it “The Outlaw Lawyer,” and they broadcast a new episode every week.

“I enjoy that podcast a great deal, and if I was not working as an attorney, I’d like to think I’d make it in the radio/podcast world,” he said.

ANDREA WOOD

FOUNDING PARTNER, THE WOOD LAW FIRM
CHARLOTTE, N.C.



Andrea Wood opened The Wood Law Firm in 1998 after practicing for various firms in Virginia and in Charlotte. She serves her clients in the areas of residential and commercial real estate, business planning and real estate litigation.

Wood holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business and accounting from Neumann University in Aston, Pennsylvania. She earned her law degree from the University of Richmond T.C. Williams School of Law where she served in the University of Richmond Law Review Association.

In addition to her day-to-day duties at her practice, Wood serves as counsel for the Charlotte Regional Mortgage Lenders Association and participates in the WaxhawWeddington Rotary Club and Turning Point, an organization in Union County that provides emergency resources for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse.

Wood and her team prioritize exceptional service to clients, lenders, Realtors and builders, and she considers the creation of Wood Law Firm as her top professional accomplishment.

“I wanted to start a firm that was different and focused on the client rather than the bottom line,” she said. “Personal service is our motto at The Wood Law Firm where I treat my clients as I want to be treated, and I think it really sets us apart.”

She attributes her success to her efforts to exceed her clients’ expectations

“I emphasize personal service and attention to detail,” she said. “I am also quick to reach out and consult with other attorneys if I don’t know the answer to something, and they do the same. By doing that, we have built a network of colleagues that help each other.”

Wood says if she had not become a lawyer, she might have pursued a career in medicine.

“Growing up as the youngest of six children, I was taught that helping others was important, and have found I am able to do that as an attorney,” she said.



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Joshua M. Whitaker
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