

## NEWS RELEASES

### Barnes & Thornburg's Columbus Office Adds Leading Real Estate Team

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**COLUMBUS** – A prominent group of five real estate attorneys whose practice is focused on community development and affordable housing has joined Barnes & Thornburg LLP's Columbus office in the firm's Real Estate Department.

Laing Akers, Holly Heer, Erik Rickard, Bryan Venesy and Phil Westerman join the firm from Squire Patton Boggs, where they have built a team involved in all aspects of real estate transactions, including extensive experience with community development, affordable housing and new markets tax credits.

"This high caliber group is at the forefront of innovative legal work in the real estate industry, ranging from tax credits to project development," said Don Williams, chair of Barnes & Thornburg's Real Estate Department. "Each attorney brings a skill set that will enhance our ability to represent owners, lenders, investors, developers and tenants in regional and national projects and transactions."

"This move immediately enhances our capabilities in Ohio and beyond," said Bill Nolan, managing partner of the firm's Columbus office. "Their practice fits perfectly at Barnes & Thornburg, and their decision to continue to build their practice here is a testament to the quality of the platform we provide for creative and high-quality legal work on a national scale. I also know from personal experience that they are great colleagues who will be critical to continuing to build our Columbus team."

This group brings Barnes & Thornburg's growing Columbus office to 18 attorneys, and further additions are expected in the weeks ahead. Nolan opened the office in 2009 and also joined from Squire Sanders, the predecessor of Squire Patton Boggs. In addition to the substantial real estate capabilities resulting from this move, strengths of the office include labor and employment, government services, business litigation, intellectual property, workers compensation, environmental law, bankruptcy, construction and health care. The office also provides an entry point for Ohio clients to the firm's full range of services throughout the Midwest and other U.S. markets.

### About the Attorneys

**Laing Akers**, of counsel, concentrates her practice on commercial real estate and corporate transactional matters including private placement of equity, affordable housing and community development transactions, leasing, commercial financing, general corporate counseling and related business matters. Akers represents companies in all stages of development and evolution including formation, capitalization planning, corporate governance and capital and debt financing. She also frequently speaks on syndication issues and low income housing tax credits. Akers

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received her bachelor's degree from Wittenberg University and her law degree from Capital University.

**Holly Heer**, partner, focuses her practice on partnership syndication and related transactions including entity formation, lending and asset management, with a particular emphasis on transactions involving the low-income housing tax credit, historic tax credit and new markets tax credit. Heer often counsels developers, syndicators and financial institutions. She is a frequent speaker on issues regarding tax credit syndication and structuring, specifically including technical tax issues regarding the low-income and historic tax credits. Heer received her bachelor's degree from Wellesley College and her law degree from University of Virginia.

**Erik Rickard**, partner, works with developers, investors, funds and financial institutions and counsels them on real estate finance, joint ventures, equity funds, new markets tax credits, low-income housing tax credits, historic rehabilitation tax credits and commercial lending law. He also assists clients in the acquisition, senior and mezzanine debt financing and equity financing of real estate. Rickard frequently speaks at conferences regarding the new markets tax credit. Rickard received his bachelor's degree from Denison University and his law degree and master's degree in International/Comparative Law from Duke University.

**Bryan Venesy**, partner, advises on complex real estate transactions including affordable housing tax credits, community development, real estate development, real estate finance, equity investments, partnerships, joint ventures, leasing and work out matters. His clients include national syndicators, owners, lenders, investors, developers and tenants. Venesy is a frequent speaker on tax credit, partnership and community development issues. Venesy received his bachelor's degree from Ohio Wesleyan University and his law degree from University of Cincinnati.

**Philip Westerman**, partner, represents equity investors, developers and lenders in a wide variety of issues concerning real estate and commercial financing transactions. Specifically, Westerman focuses on affordable housing, community development and real estate syndication and investment transactions involving low-income housing credits, historic tax credits and new markets tax credits. He also frequently speaks on low income housing tax credits. Westerman received his bachelor's degree from Wabash College and his law degree from The Ohio State University.

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