



Melissa N. Collar

Chief Legal Officer, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships
and Secretary of the Board of Directors

Rockford Construction

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Detroit | Grand Rapids | Estero

As Chief Legal Officer and Vice President of Strategic Partnerships at Rockford Construction, Melissa leads the legal and risk departments providing counsel for the company's real estate development, architecture, construction, brokerage and property management companies. She serves as a member of Rockford's executive leadership team and secretary of the Board of Directors whose responsibilities also include assisting with the company's strategic planning. Melissa is also responsible for establishing and maintaining strategic relationships with clients, partners and governmental entities. Melissa is also serving as the licensed supervising Associate Broker for the company's two brokerage companies. Melissa's passion for community is reflected in her involvement in many community boards and committees as well as regularly serving as a public speaker at events for industry and community organizations.

About Rockford: Rockford Construction and its related entities collectively provide real estate development, design/build, construction, brokerage, facility and property management services (Rockford). Rockford generates gross revenue each year that exceeds \$550 million. Rockford Construction is licensed in 45 states, has offices in Grand Rapids and Detroit, Michigan, as well as Estero, Florida. Rockford Commercial Property Management, L.L.C., manages over 3.5 million square feet of space across the state of Michigan. Rockford Development Group, L.L.C., each year completes several large-scale real estate development projects, utilizing a variety of development methods including public-private partnerships (P3). Rockford Brokerage, L.L.C., and Rockford Design/Build, L.L.C., each handle dozens of projects each year.

Past Experience: Prior to joining Rockford in 2020, Melissa spent 26 years at Warner Norcross + Judd LLP, a law firm with more than 230 attorneys working in five offices, 14 industry groups and 26 specialized practice areas. With a specialized focus on corporate, higher education, healthcare, family office, developer, utility, and quasi-public owner clients, assisted in the acquisition, brokerage, development, financing (including governmental incentives), design and construction, leasing and sale of real property. At Warner, Melissa served in multiple leadership roles including Co-Chair and Co-Founder, Infrastructure and Public-Private Partnerships (P3) Group (2017-2020); Chair, Real Estate Services Group (2009-2016); Chair, Condominium Practice Group (2002-2020); Chair, Space Planning Committee (2014-2016); Nominating Committee (2005-2006); Chair, Real Estate Services Group Forms Committee (1997-2002); and Career Development Committee (1997-1999).

Board and Civic Experience

- *Trinity Health Alliance of Michigan*, Regional Advisory Board-West Michigan (2025-present)
- *Grand Rapids Downtown Market*, Board of Directors (2021-Present); Leasing Committee (2012-Present), Chair, Leasing Committee (2022-Present)
- *Inforum - a Professional Women's Alliance*, State Board of Directors (2015-Present and 2007-2009); Governance Committee (2020-Present); West Michigan Regional Council (2005-2017), Chair (2015-2017), Vice Chair (2013-2015); State Nominating Committee (2007-2008; 2019-Present); Regional Nominating Committee (2008-2017); Chair, Communications Subcommittee (2005-2007). One of the Co-Founders of the West Michigan Region of Inforum.

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- *Cascade Country Club*, Executive Committee of the Board of Directors (2025-Present); Board of Directors (2022-Present); Membership Committees (2010-Present); Nominating Committee (2016-2020); Strategic Planning Committee (2009-2010)
- *American College of Real Estate Attorneys (ACREL)*, Fellow; Programming Committee 2023-Present); Leasing Committee, Secretary (2020-2024) and Librarian (2017-2020); Nominations Committee (2020-2024)
- *State Bar of Michigan, Real Property Section*, Ex-Officio (2018-2019), Chair (2017-2018), Chair-Elect (2016-2017), Vice Chair (2015-2016), Treasurer (2014-2015), Secretary (2013-2014), Chair of the Continuing Legal Education Committee of the Council (2009-2013); Council Coordinator (2008-2010), Co-Chair of Summer Conferences (2007-2008); Co-Chair, Construction Committee (2007)
- *Women's Resource Center*, Capital Campaign Committee (2021-2024); Board of Directors (1998-2002); Pillar Awards Host Committee (2016); 25th Anniversary Commemorative Committee (1997)
- *Grand Rapids Bar Association, Real Property Section* (1995-Present); Continuing Legal Education Committee (1996-1998)
- *Grand Rapids Children's Museum*, Exploratory Committee (2018-2020)
- *West Michigan Minority Contractors Association*, Advisory Committee (2008-2010)
- *Better Business Bureau of Western Michigan*, Chair (2004); Board of Directors (2002-2007)
- *Michigan Land Title Association*, Committee (2002-2004)
- *Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Ottawa County*, Board of Directors (1996-2001)

Education

- Wayne State University Law School J.D. 1994, cum laude; Ira J. Spoon Scholarship for real estate
- University of Michigan B.A. 1991, with distinction

Licenses

- Licensed to practice law, Michigan
- Real Estate Broker's license, Michigan

Honors and Awards

- Named "Notable West Michigan Leaders in Commercial Real Estate" by Crain's Detroit, 2023
- Named "Notable Woman in Construction" by Crain's Detroit, 2022
- Top five finalist for the "Athena Woman of the Year" by Grand Rapids Chamber, 2021
- Named a "Top Lawyer" for Real Estate by Grand Rapids Magazine, 2020 and 2021
- Named a "Leader in the Field" for Real Estate Law in Michigan by Chambers USA, 2017-2020
- Voted in as a Fellow by the American College of Real Estate Lawyers, Class of 2016
- Named the "Best Lawyers' Grand Rapids Construction Law Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers, 2018 and 2014
- Named as "Best Lawyers in America" in Construction Law and Real Estate Law, by Best Lawyers, 2010-Present
- Named as one of the "Top 50 Women Michigan Super Lawyers" by Super Lawyers, 2015
- Named as one of the "Top 25 Women Business Super Lawyers" by Super Lawyers, 2015
- Honored as an "Extraordinary Leader" by the Center for Community Leadership, 2015
- Named the "Best Lawyers' Grand Rapids Real Estate Law Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers, 2015
- Honored as one of its "Women in the Law" by Michigan Lawyers Weekly, 2014
- Named "Leading Lawyers of Michigan," by Michigan Lawyers Weekly, 2014
- Named as one of "40 Inner Circle honorees" by Inforum, 2011 and 2015
- Named to Michigan's "Super Lawyers" by Super Lawyers, 2007-Present
- Named "Leading Lawyers of Michigan," by Michigan Lawyers Weekly, 2014
- Named "40 Under 40" as one of 40 up-and-coming leaders in West Michigan by the Grand Rapids Business Journal, 2007

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- Named "Woman of Distinction" by the YMCA, 2006
- AV Preeminent Peer Review Rated, Martindale-Hubbell

Representative Project Experience

- Grand Rapids Innovation Park, a \$295.1 million P3 (public-private partnership) project. Michigan State University's vision for the Grand Rapids Innovation Park is to create a healthcare innovation hub that will spur collaboration with biomedical, bioengineering and healthcare technology, and locate industries to commercialize, patent and license research and innovation. Rockford is a private investor, developer, constructor, and property manager in the project.
- Grand Rapids Downtown Market, a \$32 million public-private partnership that brings fresh, innovative food, culinary education, and horticulture to the city's urban core. It has been reported to have sparked over \$100 million in nearby development.
- Served as counsel to develop more than \$1 billion in Build Transfer Agreements and Development Agreements for wind and solar energy in Michigan and Wisconsin for Michigan and Florida regulated utility providers and their non-regulated divisions. Also prepared and negotiated Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Agreements for alternative energy sources of private companies.
- Served as part of the US legal team at Warner Norcross + Judd LLP as real estate and construction counsel to both the Canadian government and the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority in connection with the \$5.7 billion Gordie Howe International Bridge.
- On behalf of developers, assisted in strategy development and as legal counsel in mixed-use projects such as Arena Place, a \$50 million, 200,000-square-foot mixed-use property and The Venue/20 Monroe, a \$33 million entertainment and multi-family housing project, both in the redeveloping core of downtown Grand Rapids.
- Prepared and negotiated hotel development and acquisition and disposition documents for three hotel operators who collectively own 40 hotels.
- Negotiated all leases for two major national retailers with more than 350 locations across the country, one regional retailer with 75 locations and several smaller restaurant chains.
- Prepared and negotiated design, construction, purchase agreements and lease documents for the \$280 million Helen DeVos Children's Hospital and the \$100 million Lemmen-Holton Cancer Pavilion.
- Assisted in the acquisition, development and construction contracting of NASCAR race team headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina.
- Prepared, negotiated, and oversaw upwards of 400 wireless (cell) tower leases for wireless communication providers in the Midwest region.
- Extensive experience with the preparation of complex condominium documents for office, medical, hotel, marinas, RV campgrounds and mixed-use developments. Representative transactions include The Rowe, The Morton, the Fred and Lena Meijer Heart Center, Town Square Mixed Use Condominium and Midtown Parking Condominium, which range in project construction cost from \$5 million to \$80 million.
- Handled Farmland Development Rights Agreements and releases, conservation easements, Qualified Agricultural Property exemptions, crop leases and similar agriculture agreements.
- Served as counsel on multiple higher education capital construction projects. Representative transactions include the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, Northwood University and Aquinas College.
- Handled real estate broker licensing issues, including establishing brokerage companies and counseling on licensing matters.
- Extensive experience with quasi-public construction projects using federal and state economic incentives and grants as funding sources. Significant tax abatement experience includes the preparation of several dozen applications for tax abatements up to \$10 million for companies ranging in size from small firms to large publicly traded manufacturers, as well as on New Market Tax Credit projects, such as Heart of the City Health Care and Bay Area YMCA.

Speaking Engagements

- Myriad legal topics, Michigan Society of Professional Surveyors, surveyors' state-wide annual conference at myriad locations in Michigan, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2025
- Business Boot Camp - Basics of Real Estate, State Bar of Michigan Business Law Section, Grand Rapids and Detroit, 2011-12, 2014-15, 2017-2018, 2024-2025, respectively

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- Understanding General Counsel Perspectives, 35th Annual Business Law Institute, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 9/20/2024
- No Shame in the Supply Chain Game, ICSC + Continuing Education, Novi, Michigan, 4/26/2023
- Western Michigan University Women's Business Network, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 4/16/2023
- Pursuing P3s in Today's Market: Latest Negotiation and Deal Strategies, American Law Institute and ACREL CLE, webinar, 2/28/2023
- When Bad Things Happen to Good Projects, joint program of the American Bar Association, Real Property, Trust & Estate Law Section and ACREL CLE, webinar, 3/16/2022
- Real Property Law Academy II – Land Division Act, Grand Rapids and Detroit, Michigan, 10/10/2018, 5/8/2019, 9/20/2022, 5/10/2023
- Meet Her, Inforum series introduces listeners to women of accomplishment whose experiences and insights feed us all on our leadership journeys, podcast, 9/1/2021
- Asset Recycling - Privatizing Infrastructure Through P3 Structures, American Bar Association, Real Property, Trust & Estate Law Section, webinar, 4/22/2020
- Women in Leadership, CREW Network Foundation, webinar, 4/4/2021
- When You've Seen One P3, You've Seen One P3: The Emergence of and Ideas Behind Public/Private Partnerships, ACREL Fall 2019 Annual Meeting, plenary presentation and roundtables, Montreal, Canada, 10/19/2019
- Building Michigan: Anatomy of a Public Private Partnership, State Bar of Michigan Real Property Section Summer Conference, Boyne Falls, Michigan, 7/11/2019
- Retail Roundtable: West Michigan Retail Sector Prepares for Changes, Prioritizes Customer Experience, MiBiz Q&A interview, 6/9/2019
- Executive Leadership Forum, Inforum, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 4/23/2019
- The Yellow Brick Road. Are Public Private Partnerships the Pot of Gold for Infrastructure Development?, ACREL Fall Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, 10/20/2018
- Wisdom for Women - Insights to Grow Your Wealth and Career, Words of Wisdom Conference, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 10/2/2018
- PFAS, Grand Rapids Association of Realtors, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 3/28/2018
- Center for Leadership, Detroit, Michigan, 2014, 2016, 2018
- An Overview of the EPC Agreement and Process, Jackson, Michigan, 3/13/2017
- Every Company Needs a Corporate 'Home', Women's Foundation, Entrepreneur YOU Conference, Lansing, Michigan, 3/10/2017
- Legal Update / State of the Law, International Council of Shopping Centers, Novi, Michigan, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020
- Legal Update, State Bar of Michigan Real Property Section, Winter Conference, Phoenix, Arizona, 2016
- Land Division Act, Grand Rapids Bar Association, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014
- Land Division Act, State Bar of Michigan Real Property Section, Troy, Michigan, 2014
- Legal Update, State Bar of Michigan Real Property Section, Summer Conferences, Crystal Mountain and Traverse City, Michigan, 2013, 2014, respectively
- You Have to Know It to Sell It -- Construction Basics for Brokers, International Council of Shopping Centers, Novi, Michigan, 2013
- Nuts to Bolts: Construction for Non-Construction Lawyers, Homeward Bound Series sponsored by ICLE and the State Bar of Michigan, Novi, Michigan, 2/7/2013
- Myriad legal topics, Institute of Continuing Legal Education, Troy, Michigan, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2011
- Broker Legal Update, West Michigan Summit, Commercial Alliance of Realtors, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2008, 2009
- Myriad legal topics, Synergy (annual meeting of Michigan real estate brokers), multiple locations in Michigan, 2004, 2006, 2007
- Broker Legal Update, Grand Rapids Association of Realtors, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005, 2006

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- Legal Update, Annual Convention, Michigan Association of Realtors, Lansing and Detroit, Michigan 2004, 2005
- Handling Legal Issues in Michigan's Landlord-Tenant Relationship, National Business Institute, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 3/2/2004
- Setting Yourself Apart: Helpful Hints When Representing a Buyer as a Buyer's Agent, Grand Rapids Association of Realtors, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002
- Legal Survey of Case Law, 50th Judicial Circuit Bar Association, Marquette, Michigan, 1998
- Adjunct Instructor, Real Estate and the Law, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, fall semesters 1996, 1997, 1998

Publications

- "Roundtable: Execs see more growth ahead for urban projects amid continued demand for amenities," *MiBiz*, 12/9/2018
- "Strength of West Michigan real estate industry should carry over into 2018," *MiBiz*, 12/10/2017
- "Deepwater Horizon—A Cautionary 'Tale' on Insurance Indemnity Clauses," *SBM Real Property Law Section e-Newsletter*, 2/1/2017
- "'Deepwater Horizon'—A cautionary insurance tale," *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, 12/16/2016
- "Five things to do before buying property," *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, 7/22/2016
- "Energy contracting can offer big savings," *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, 2/8/2013
- "Due Diligence Required to Get from a Purchase Agreement to Closing," *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, 10/8/2012
- "Strategic Planning Critical to Successful Real Estate Deal," *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, 8/8/2011
- "Due Diligence and Dispute Resolution: The Role Each Plays to Improve Commercial Real Estate Loan Repayments," *Michigan Banker*, 1/2011
- Contributing author, "Case Study: The Legal Issues of Green Building," *How to Design and Build a Green Office Building*, 1st ed., 2011
- "Getting Paid in Challenging Times," *CREW Newsletter*, 7/2010
- "Green Brings Green: Plan Ahead with Construction Contracts to Secure Incentives and Savings," *Commercial Quarterly*, 1/2010
- "Coping with the Housing Downturn: Three Things Every Business Should Know," *Commercial Quarterly*, 11/2008
- "Point of View," *Business Review West Michigan*, Fall 2008
- "Buyer Beware: Title Insurance May Not be Enough," *Commercial Quarterly*, 2/2008
- "Decreasing Real and Personal Property Taxes - PA 198 Tax Abatements," *Grand Rapids Business Journal*, 2008
- "Please, Don't Buy Flowers on My Dime - What Tenants Need to Know about Pass-Through Leasing Expenses," *MiBiz*, 4/2007
- "Legal Update," Real Estate Services Group *E-Bulletin*, 7/1/2006
- "Historic Tax Preservation," *West Michigan Commercial Development & Real Estate Quarterly*, 10/1/2003
- Co-Author of Chapters 6, 8 and 10 of *The Practitioner's Guide to Construction Law*, 1st ed., 2000
- Co-Author of Chapter 17 of *Michigan Real Property Law*, 2d ed., 1993 and Supp. 1995

Additional Professional Affiliations

- American Bar Association, Construction Industry Forum, Business Law Section, Real Property, Trust & Estate Law Section
- American Institute of Architects
- Association of Corporate Counsel
- Commercial Alliance of Realtors
- Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW), Detroit and Grand Rapids chapters
- Grand Rapids Association of Realtors
- Home and Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids

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