

PARTNER

Katherine Garrahan

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OVERVIEW

Katherine Garrahan is a real estate and land use attorney focused on helping commercial, nonprofit, and institutional clients, primarily in MetroWest and Central Massachusetts, considering land use, zoning, and permitting options and challenges. Kathy regularly provides creative, problem-solving counsel and representation to developers, owners of shopping centers and office buildings, banks, nonprofits, and other clients, from mid-range to big corporate, in key areas of the real estate process, including:

- Real estate development
- Land-use planning, zoning and permitting
- Conveyancing
- Leasing

Kathy's experience bridges many sectors, including schools, clinics, labs and specialty facilities, housing, and senior living. "Clients appreciate that I'm a people person, a team player, and take the time to explain what negotiated agreements, statutes, regulations, and bylaws mean for their businesses and projects," Kathy notes, "qualities that help...especially when my client has undertaken a technically complex project or is involved in a politically sensitive or potentially contentious matter."

Her land use advocacy includes due diligence, obtaining local and state permitting and licensing approvals, handling negotiations and drafting agreements concerning real property purchases, sales, leases and financing. She frequently appears on behalf of her clients before local and state authorities and municipal boards and commissions.

In addition to being in the public arena, her work in nonprofit housing development includes financing programs of state and federal agencies, such as the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs of the Federal Home Loan Bank and zoning work related to M.G.L. c. 40A, §3 (nonprofit educational uses).

Before Bowditch

Prior to her career as an attorney, Kathy worked as a social worker, public administrator, and consultant in the government and healthcare industries in Massachusetts and New York City – including program administration, budget forecasting, and

planning – and headed up the fiscal affairs department of a small state agency. In addition, she co-founded a successful nonprofit private elementary school in MetroWest.

Besides work

“I like to spend a lot of time outdoors...walking trails year-round.” Kathy gets to the ocean when she can and enjoys kayaking local lakes and rivers. “I take great satisfaction in being an ambassador for all that MetroWest and Massachusetts have to offer.”

EXPERIENCE

Getting a permit in a complex design site redevelopment

A large, regional developer needed to get permit approval to close the acquisition of a site in MetroWest, a former big-box retail facility slated for mixed-use commercial and residential reuse. “While there wasn’t a lot of opposition,” Kathy explained, “it was an oddly-shaped site and needed a creative site plan and design.” Kathy quarterbacked a team comprising civil, traffic and stormwater engineers and architects to address key issues, such as traffic and pedestrian accommodations. “I enjoyed being part of a team of professionals tackling difficult challenges. In this case, that included conforming the design to a local Overlay District.” The permit was issued, and the project has ramped up for construction.

Complicated jurisdictional and environmental issues in a permitting process

When a global corporation was developing a new MetroWest headquarters campus, it ran into a thorny jurisdictional issue. A key part of the project, a large parking garage containing offices and a training center, straddled two town lines. “This meant two complex sets of hearings and applications,” Kathy noted. “There was also an environmental compliance component because of the development’s proximity to a wetlands.” Kathy and a team of engineers and environmental experts successfully addressed state and federal regulatory factors, and the permits were issued.

Reuse of properties for changing economic realities

Current economic changes and housing shortages mean that use changes or rezoning are more frequently part of early discussions with clients. Whether converting an office building to mixed use, locating lab space at a shopping center, or transforming a vacant school or office building to housing, Kathy enjoys working with clients and their engineering and architect consultants to help identify options, navigate approval processes and build working relationships with local officials.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

- Zoning change and permitting for campus expansion for a software company in Massachusetts, doubling the size of their facilities to prepare for anticipated growth
- Approval of a life science accelerator at the site of a former hotel in Massachusetts, requiring approvals from the local Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board
- Planning Board approval of adaptive reuse of a small office building for office/housing mixed use on a Massachusetts commercial corridor
- Approval of new childcare center on a Massachusetts commercial corridor with adaptive reuse of a former retail and service structure
- Use variance to allow an electric vehicle dealership at former office building campus in Massachusetts

AFFILIATIONS

- Board of Directors, MetroWest Legal Services (Past President)
- General Counsel and Past Chair, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce
- Director, Clerk, and Leadership in Diversity Awards Steering Committee Member, Alliance for MetroWest Unity, Inc.
- Co-Founder and Board of Visitors Member, Summit Montessori School
- Board Member, Community Foundation for MetroWest
- Board of Directors, MetroWest Medical Center
- Volunteer, Framingham Medical Reserve Corps
- Member, Women's Bar Association
- Member, New York State Bar Association
- Member, Real Estate Bar Association, MetroWest Bar Association, Boston Bar Association and American Bar Association

HONORS

- *Best Lawyers in America*, Land Use and Zoning Law (2023-2025)
- Business Leader of the Year, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce (2022)
- "Top Women of Law," *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* (2015)
- *Massachusetts Super Lawyers* Rising Star (2012-2014)

ARTICLES & TALKS

ARTICLES

- "Raising businesses and communities higher: The value of nonprofit board service," *Worcester Business Journal*, 2023
- "Municipal adaptations, collaborations are key to community resilience," Massachusetts Municipal Association, 2020
- "Broader state authorization, municipal flexibility needed to help businesses survive," *Worcester Telegram*, 2020

TALKS

- A Checklist for Adjusting Your Brewery for Phase II, Massachusetts Brewers Guild, 2020

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Massachusetts
- New York

EDUCATION

- J.D., Northeastern University
- M.P.H., Columbia University

- M.S., Columbia University School of Social Work
- B.A., College of the Holy Cross