MILLER JOHNSON Attorneys

Emily C. Palacios

MEMBER

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Emily Palacios focuses her practice on transactional and litigation matters involving real estate, construction, land use, and public law and government affairs. She has practiced law in Michigan since 2002 and is a member in our Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo offices.

Real Estate and Construction

Emily advises clients in all types of real estate transactions, from acquisition and construction to leasing and disposition. Her experience includes converting multiple-family rental properties to condominium projects, due diligence supporting construction financing of commercial and industrial projects, drafting and negotiation of renewable energy (wind and solar) build-transfer agreements, and assisting clients pursue project incentives under the Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act, Commercial Property Rehabilitation Act, among others.

Emily additionally represents clients in real estate and construction disputes. She litigates claims involving purchase agreements, development agreements, commercial leases, rights of first offer/first refusal, and easements. Her experience also includes prosecuting quiet-title and plat vacation actions in support of the redevelopment of obsolete subdivisions and arbitrating construction disputes on behalf of owners and construction managers.

Land Use, Zoning and Historic Preservation

Practice Areas

- Business and Corporate
- Commercial Real Estate
- Construction
- Corporate Real Estate
- Election Law
- Environmental
- Government Affairs
- Hospitality Industry
- Land Use and Zoning
- Litigation
- Native American Law
- Public Sector
- Real Estate
- Renewable Energy
- Government Solutions

Education

- J.D., University of Michigan Law School, *magna cum laude,* 2002
- M.U.P. and B.A., University of Michigan, high honors

Admissions

- Michigan

Honors

- Recognized as a 2026 Michigan *Super Lawyer* for Land Use/Zoning Law
- Recognized as a *Best Lawyers* for Litigation – Real Estate (2024, 2025 & 2027)

Emily is one of the state's leading land use law experts. She represents clients before planning commissions, zoning boards of appeal, historic district commissions, and administrative hearing officers, where she is adept at positioning projects for approval and laying the groundwork for legal challenges when necessary.

Emily's recent project experience includes planned development zoning for a sports and entertainment arena, special land use permits and zoning variances for a utility-scale wind energy facility, airport zoning permits and variances for wind turbines, approval of new construction in a local historic district, negotiation of a consent judgment following an appeal of the denial of a special land use permit for a utility substation, and local and county permitting for utility-scale solar energy projects.

Public Law and Government Affairs

Emily serves as special outside counsel to governmental authorities on a variety of issues, including matters arising under the Michigan and U.S. Constitutions, Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Michigan Election Law, and the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act. She also advises clients on issues arising under the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, and under laws governing public official conflicts of interest.

Emily drafts and reviews proposed legislation on behalf of clients and assists clients advance policy initiatives.

Professional Affiliations, Activities, and Honors

Emily is a member of the State Bar of Michigan (SBM) and active in the Real Estate and Government Law sections. She is an appointed member of SBM's Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee.

Emily is also member of the Michigan Association of Planning and serves on its Planning Law Committee. She is former municipal planning consultant and held professional

- Recognized as a *Best Lawyers* for Land Use and Zoning Law, and Litigation – Construction (2025 & 2027)
- Named as a 2023 *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* Go To Lawyer for Construction Law
- *DBusiness Magazine:* Top Lawyer in Energy Law, Construction Law, and Litigation – Construction
- University of Michigan Law School: Managing Article Editor for the Journal of Law Reform

Professional Affiliations

- State Bar of Michigan: appointed member, Unauthorized Practice of Law Subcommittee; member, Real Property section and Zoning Law committee
- Michigan Association of Planners: member; sits on Planning Law committee

Clerkships

- Honorable Judge Cornelia G. Kennedy of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

Court Admissions

- State of Michigan
- United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan
- United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan
- United States District Court for the Norther District of Ohio
- United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

certifications from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and the State of Michigan (Professional Community Planner license).

Emily is recognized in *Best Lawyers* 2024, 2025 & 2027 for Litigation – Real Estate and for 2025 & 2027 Land Use and Zoning Law, and Litigation – Construction. She was honored by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* as a 2023 & 2025 Go To Lawyer – Construction Law and is recognized as a Michigan Super Lawyer for Land Use/Zoning Law, 2026.

Recent Articles and Presentations

- Moderator, Michigan Association of Planning's Spring Institute: Creating Michigan Communities of the Future, May 2023
- "COA Affirms Tree Preservation Ordinance Effected a Regulatory Taking," SBM Real Property Law Section e-Newsletter, December 2021
- "New Challenges Face MRTMA Opt-Out Communities in Michigan," Briefly: A Publication of the Government Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, June 2021
- "Opt-Out Communities Targeted by Marihuana Industry: Ballot Proposals & Litigation Followed." Planning and Zoning News, Vol. 39, No. 2, December 2020
- Presenter, Managing Risk Workshop, Michigan Association of Planning, March 2021 and March 2022
- Co-Presenter, "What is the Impact of FP Development v. Canton on Tree Preservation Ordinances and Municipal Permitting?" State Bar of Michigan, Government Law Section, Winter Seminar, February 2022
- Co-Presenter, Woodland Preservation Webinar, Michigan Association of Planning, January 2022
- Panelist, Marihuana Initiative Petitions, State Bar of Michigan, Government Law Section, Winter Seminar, February 2021

Community Activity

Emily was recently appointed to the Board of Review for Ann Arbor Charter Township.

Education and Clerkship

Emily received her J.D., *magna cum laude,* from the University of Michigan Law School, where she served as the Managing Articles Editor for the Journal of Law Reform and won several legal writing awards. Prior to law school, she earned a M.U.P. and a B.A. degree with high honors from the University of Michigan.

Before private practice, Emily clerked for the Honorable Judge Cornelia G. Kennedy of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.