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## **2016 Women in Real Estate: Melanie Meyers**

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Melanie Meyers, Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP

Name: Melanie Meyers

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Years in real estate: Getting close to 30 years!

Company Name: Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP

Year Founded: 1890s

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How did you get your start in real estate?

I started my career as an architect. I love design but quickly learned that I had a deeper interest in urbanism and the macro-level issues of how cities are formed and developed from the ground up. With that understanding, I pursued my law degree with the goal of becoming a development attorney. After graduating law school and several years first in a firm and then as a law professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, I served as general counsel to the New York City Department of City Planning from 1994 to 1998. That experience solidified my interest in New York City development and in particular the interface between public and private parties in achieving that development. I have been happily representing developers and institutions since that time, including at Fried Frank since 2004.

What real estate associations or organizations are you a member of?

I am a member of WX New York Women Executives in Real Estate. I also am on the Board of Governors for Real Estate Board of New York and the Advisory Board of Real Estate Law Reporter.

What recent project or transaction are you most proud of?

It is hard to pick a favorite. Currently, I am working on a variety of projects in the Times Square area that celebrate and build on the area's history as an entertainment center at the crossroads of the World. One of these projects is representing Maefield Development in their redevelopment of 1568 Broadway that includes elevating and renovating the historic Palace Theater within a modern building to give it the presence, lobby and support spaces the beautiful theater deserves. I have also continued to work on a number of transformative projects throughout the city, including: the development of the Western Rail Yards in the Hudson Yards area for the Related Companies; the development of Greenpoint Landing along one-half mile of the Brooklyn waterfront for the Park Tower Group and its affiliate Greenpoint Landing Associates; development of the 16 acre Pacific Park project in downtown Brooklyn for Greenland Forest City Partners; and Technion Institute of Technology and Cornell University's development of a new science and technology campus on Roosevelt Island.

What recent honor, achievement or recognition has meant the most to you and why?

Last year, I was presented with a "Women Who Dared Award" by the National Council of Jewish Women New York Section (NCJW NY) along with Florence Fabricant, Ellen Futter and Elaine Mandelbaum. This is an award that honors women who are leaders in their fields, inspire and empower other women, and have made a difference in the quality of life of New Yorkers. The NCJW NY is a grassroots organization that strives to improve the lives of families, women, children and the elderly through community service, education, and advocacy. It particularly meant a lot to me because I was nominated by one of my clients.

What have been some of the benefits of being a mentor or having a mentor?

I was very lucky in the early stages of my career to work with a land use partner that, in addition to being quite brilliant, was a master at balancing the political, legal, and practical complexities of land use and development in New York City. He was more than generous with his time in sharing his

knowledge and providing the opportunity for me to build on this expertise. That early experience gave me the confidence to jump on opportunities that presented themselves, such as teaching and working in government. It also gave me a very good sense of who I wanted to work with when I went back into private practice: I have been able to work with that mentor for the past 18 years and continue to learn from him every day.

Who or what has been the strongest influence on your career and why?

While I only worked as general counsel of City Planning for four years, that time was central to my development as the attorney I am today. City Planning implements the Administration's land use policies and also reviews and oversees all private land use applications in the City, and my role as general counsel put me in the middle of this activity. I left the City with an understanding and appreciation of the constraints and opportunities associated with government's role in land use policy that continues to inform my practice.

What time management strategies do you find to be the most effective for you?

It's always a challenge! I do resort to lists when I am feeling particularly stretched, and take an inordinate amount of pleasure in crossing things off.

What is the best advice you have received and who was it from?

Probably my husband, though I'm not sure he would claim to have ever given me advice. He spent most of his career working at Sesame Street directing Elmo and Grover, where having a great sense of humor was a professional requirement. It doesn't translate perfectly into the law, but maintaining perspective and laughing at least a few times a day makes the hard work worthwhile.

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