

ASHLEY TAN

Associate, Sullivan & Worcester, Boston
Boston University School of Law



"I studied urban design and economics in college, and I was fascinated by how the first zoning laws were implemented for good."

Q. What's the most satisfying case or matter you've worked on so far?

A. It's always very rewarding to work on affordable housing development projects. Last year, I helped an affordable housing developer get their permits and approvals for a new affordable housing complex. It was very satisfying to advise the client and their consultants on how to get the project approved in an efficient manner and to make a little contribution to the efforts of alleviating our region's housing crisis.

Q. What is the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

A. As a transactional attorney, you can't just be really good at drafting. Instead, you also need to strive to be an expert who clients trust and keep going back to for counsel and advice.

Q. What advice would you offer new law school graduates?

A. Learn from your peers and partners, and also learn from everyone else you cross paths with in your office.

Q. What is the toughest part of your job?

A. The toughest part of my job is constantly juggling

multiple projects and deals at the same time. Not only do we need to maintain the level of accuracy and attention to detail that is required of us, we also need to make clients feel like they are getting the attention that they deserve and hire us for.

Q. What's one thing about you that might surprise people?

A. Weather permitting, I bike to most places, including work. It helps me stay active and notice the environment around me in a way I wouldn't otherwise be able to.

Q. Why did you decide to become a lawyer?

A. I studied urban design and economics in college, and I was fascinated by how the first zoning laws were implemented for good to provide sunlight in dense urban areas and prevent overcrowding, and how that evolved in some places into exclusionary zoning and keeping certain people out of certain neighborhoods. It opened my eyes to how municipal law heavily impacts our day-to-day lives and wellbeing. Frankly, I also wasn't a particularly good designer, so I thought I could better contribute to society by focusing on the legal side of planning and development. **MLW**

Associate member, City of Cambridge Planning Board; committee member, Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts; member, DEI and Real Estate Sections of the Boston Bar Association and Urban Land Institute; volunteer and member of the Women's Networking Group of the Real Estate Bar Association; founding board member, Taiwanese American Professionals, Boston Chapter.

COURTNEY A. SIMMONS

Associate, Davis Malm, Boston
Boston University School of Law



"Being a good lawyer entails so much more than understanding the law."

Courtney A. Simmons' passion for real estate and environmental law was cemented in 2014, when she drove cross-country for an internship with an Alaskan law firm. A former law clerk for the Appeals Court and the Land Court, she focuses her practice on commercial litigation and real estate matters.

Q. What's the most satisfying case or matter you've worked on so far?

A. I resolved a very difficult title problem for a client that involved examining family genealogy over 100 years and ensuring that everyone's property rights were accounted for in correcting the title defect before the property could be transferred.

Q. What is the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

A. Treat your clients' issues and matters as if they were your own. It makes you a better advocate and a more compassionate attorney.

Q. What advice would you offer new law school graduates?

A. You are going to make mistakes in learning and growing to be an attorney, but it is what you do with those mistakes that matters. Learn lessons from those mistakes that you won't repeat again and move forward.

Q. What's the biggest mistake you've made professionally?

A. Being afraid to ask for advice early on. Your

colleagues understand you are still learning and don't expect you to have all of the answers. You won't come off as stupid for asking questions or seeking guidance, but you will if you continue blindly down a path without seeking the help of others with more experience.

Q. What's one thing about you that might surprise people?

A. Before law school, I studied to become a wildlife biologist and natural resource manager. I guess you could say that before I decided to advocate for people, I wanted to advocate for the environment and wildlife.

Q. What's the most important thing you've learned since you started practicing law?

A. A lawyer is not just a legal advocate for their clients, but should be a trusted advisor, consultant and, at times, a friend. Being a good lawyer entails so much more than understanding the law.

Q. As a lawyer, what are you most afraid of?

A. Disappointing a client and not being able to obtain the relief they are seeking. However, if you can look in the mirror and feel confident in the work you have done, then you have done your job. **MLW**

Co-chair, Boston Bar Association's Pro Bono/Public Service Subcommittee of the Environmental and Energy Law Committee; member, International Lawyers Network, firm's Marketing Committee; co-captain, firm's Lawyers Have Heart team.