

# Duffy & Sweeney

## DIVISION OF STEVENS & LEE



### CONTACT

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### EDUCATION

Roger Williams University  
School of Law, J.D.

University of Massachusetts,  
Dartmouth, B.A. *summa cum laude*

### PRACTICE AREAS

Construction Law

Litigation

Real Estate & Land Use

### BAR AND COURT ADMISSIONS

Rhode Island

Massachusetts

US District Court for the  
District of Massachusetts

US District Court for the  
District of Rhode Island

U.S. Supreme Court

## JOELLE ROCHA, *PARTNER*

### OVERVIEW

Joelle focuses her practice on real estate development, land use and real estate litigation. She represents private developers in residential, commercial, mixed use and solar projects and before municipal and state boards and agencies. Her representations also include property owners and developers in litigation related to site control, breach of contract and litigation against municipalities, including numerous cases of first impression.

She has successfully litigated several class actions against municipalities regarding illegal and excessive impact fees and building permit fees and has recovered litigation costs for her clients. She has argued before the Rhode Island Supreme Court in matters involving challenges to local ordinances and recovery of attorneys' fees.

In 2023, Joelle was hired by the Speaker of the House of Rhode Island to work with him and his policy team to draft housing packages resulting in the first major changes to land use law in three decades. She was retained by the Speaker for this same role in 2024 and 2025.

Joelle is a former Assistant to the Solicitor for the towns of Warren, RI, and Lincoln, RI.

### COMMUNITY

- ONE Neighborhood Builders, Board Member
- Roger Williams University School of Law, Board of Directors
- Downtown Providence Park Network, Board of Directors

### RECOGNITION

- Recognized by *Best Lawyers in America*, Commercial Litigation, Land Use and Zoning Law, Litigation – Construction, Litigation - Land Use and Zoning, Litigation - Real Estate, Providence, 2022-Present
- Rhode Island Bar Association, Fellow
- Garnered the Rhode Island Bar Association Lauren E. Jones, Esq. Writing Award for co-authoring the Rhode Island Bar Journal article "Seismic Changes to RI's Land Use Laws: What You Need to Know," 2024
- Named a "Rising Star" by *Super Lawyers*, General Litigation, Providence, 2011
- Named among "Forty Under 40" by *Providence Business News*
- Garnered "Excellence in the Law" distinction and the "Outstanding Women in Business" award from *Rhode Island Monthly*

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JOELLE ROCHA, *PARTNER* continued

## PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

Joelle received the Rhode Island Bar Association/Bar Journal Writing Award in 2024 with her co-author Amy Goins for the article entitled: "Seismic Changes to RI's Land Use Laws: What You Need to Know."

In 2024, Joelle Rocha moderated the session entitled "Affordable housing risk and reward: Balancing the need for affordable/multifamily housing development with the uncertainty of investment and an acceptable rate of return" at the second annual real estate symposium of the Roger Williams University Cummings Institute for Real Estate.

In 2024, Joelle Rocha was part of a speaking panel on "Recent Amendments to Land Use Laws: How it Started, How it's Going." The panelists reviewed the 2023 amendments to Rhode Island's enabling statutes for land use and discuss how the new laws affect clients' development applications. The speakers focused on how municipalities have incorporated the recent statutory changes into new ordinances and regulations, pending legislation affecting land use matters, and the Rhode Island Superior Court's new Land Use Calendar.

In 2023, Joelle was part of a speaker panel on "Recent Developments in Land Use Law." They covered recent amendments to the enabling statutes and other laws governing the review and approval of development applications by municipal land use boards; lessons learned from recent judicial opinions involving land use; and issues related to legislative commissions involving land use and affordable housing.

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