

The Future of Cities

Event

January 27, 2026 | Breakfast Networking Reception: 9:00 – 9:45 am CT | Panel Discussion: 9:45 – 11:00 am CT

Join us for an inspiring and forward-looking conversation on *The Future of Cities*, featuring Carol Ross Barney, internationally renowned architect and urban visionary, and Laura Appenzeller, a leader in innovation ecosystems and real estate partnerships at the University of Illinois.

Cities are at a defining moment. From climate pressures to the transformation of underutilized land into innovation hubs, the decisions we make today will shape how we live tomorrow.

This thought-provoking discussion will be moderated by Sheila Kailus, Real Estate Partner at Jenner & Block.

Panelists



Carol Ross Barney

Carol Ross Barney, FAIA, HASLA, recipient of the 2023 AIA Gold Medal, has been at the forefront of civic space design since founding Ross Barney Architects in 1981. For nearly five decades, Carol has dedicated her career to creating public spaces that enrich urban life and advance sustainability. Her award-winning portfolio includes landmark projects such as the Chicago Riverwalk, the Oklahoma City Federal Building, and the McDonald's Global Flagship in Chicago.

Through projects like the Searle Visitor Center at Lincoln Park Zoo and O’Hare’s Multi-Modal Terminal, Carol continues to shape environments that connect people, place, and community. A University of Illinois alumna and former Peace Corps volunteer, Carol’s career has shaped the public realm through projects that champion design excellence as a right, not a privilege.



Laura Appenzeller

Laura Appenzeller is the Executive Director of the University of Illinois Research Park and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Innovation at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she leads efforts to advance research commercialization and industry partnerships. She has been instrumental in growing the Research Park into a thriving hub of more than 120 companies and 2,000 employees, fostering collaboration between startups, corporations, and university talent.

Laura's leadership has guided major initiatives including the EnterpriseWorks incubator, the Illinois FAST Center, and the federally funded iFAB Tech Hub. A recognized leader in innovation and economic development, Laura is widely admired for her vision in building partnerships that drive technological advancement and regional growth.

Moderator



Sheila Kailus

As a Partner at Jenner & Block, Sheila Kailus represents property owners, operators, and developers with their most critical real estate transaction needs. Be it a privately held small company or a public Fortune 500 titan, Sheila provides strategic and thoughtful legal counsel for complex real estate transactions, real estate developments and loan workouts.

Sheila is well versed in addressing operational issues that affect real estate owners. She also has deep experience forming joint ventures (and resolving thorny joint venture disputes). As a former in-house attorney in both private and public companies, she understands her clients' business needs and develops effective strategies that solve their legal issues.

Related Attorneys



Sheila Kailus

Partner

skailus@jenner.com

+1 312 840 7615

Event Information

Jenner & Block

353 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60654

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