



AMARA L. MORRISON

Attorney

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Oakland, California

Amara understands municipal law, land use, and real estate from just about every angle. With more than 25 years of experience as an assistant city attorney, she's worked closely with mixed use, residential, commercial, industrial and hotel developers, public agencies, and individuals and community groups on everything from land use approvals and subdivisions to capital improvement projects. She has extensive experience in all aspects of land use law, including compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Permit Streamlining Act, planning and zoning law, the Subdivision Map Act and affordable housing laws, including density bonus and SB 35.

Amara is currently general counsel to various transportation agencies and Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts (GHADs). Prior to private practice, Amara served as assistant city attorney for two Bay Area cities, where she advised officials and staff on matters including the California Public Records Act, the Ralph M. Brown Act, public finance and contracts, solid waste, risk management and conflicts of interest, First Amendment, and redevelopment. She drafted the state's first comprehensive no-smoking ordinance, which banned smoking in the workplace (including bars and restaurants), cigarette vending machines, and smoking in multi-family housing units, an action followed by jurisdictions around the country.

Valued by clients for her responsive, determined, pragmatic style, she was named "Woman of Influence" by Globe Street Real Estate in 2019. Amara was also honored as one of San Francisco Business Times' "Most Influential Women in Bay Area Business" in 2020.

Amara is proud of her lengthy service to non-profit organizations, previously as Secretary and Board Member of Save Mount Diablo and currently as a Board Member of the Bay Planning Coalition. She is also co-chair of the Programs Committee for the East Bay Chapter of Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW).

Amara is an avid dressage rider and hiker and proud parent of her daughter, Islay, a rising freshman at Brandeis University.

EDUCATION

- J.D. and M.S.L., magna cum laude, Vermont Law School
- B.S., University of Michigan

AREAS OF PRACTICE

- Environmental
- Land Use
- Public Agency
- Transportation Agencies

AWARDS AND HONORS

- "Most Influential Women in Bay Area Business" Awards List, San Francisco Business Times, May 2020
- Selected as a "Woman of Influence," GlobeSt. Real Estate Forum, July/August 2019
- AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rated (the highest rating available), by Martindale-Hubbell

ARTICLES AND PRESENTATIONS

- Speaker, "Streamlined Housing Laws and New Housing Legislation," League of California Cities' Planning Commissioner Academy, March 17, 2022
- Speaker, "Streamlined Housing Approval with SB 35, SB 330 and New Pro-Housing Legislation," Wendel Rosen LLP, October 20, 2021
- Author, "California Supreme Court Denies Review in Berkeley Shellmound Case Paving the Way for Housing Under SB 35," Wendel Rosen LLP, August 2021
- Speaker, "Density Bonus: A Strong Development Tool Gets Stronger," Wendel Rosen LLP, June 2, 2021
- Author, "Superior Court Validates Cupertino's Streamlined Approval of Major Affordable Housing and Office Project," Wendel Rosen LLP, May 6, 2020
- Author, "Due Process Issues Related to Remote Public Hearings," Wendel Rosen LLP, May 2020
- Speaker, "Current Topics in Planning Law – from Cannabis to the Fast Track," American Planning Association California Chapter Northern (APACA) Webinar, November 15, 2019
- Author, "Wendel Rosen Focuses on More than Just the Law," Contra Costa Lawyer, July 2019
- Speaker, "Streamlined Processing of Ministerial Projects Under SB 35," City of Attorneys' Spring Conference, May 2019
- Speaker, "Is Your City Ready for Senate Bill 35 League of CA Cities' Planning Commissioner Academy, March 7, 2019
- Author, "California Housing Bills Impacting 2019, March 1, 2019
- Speaker, "2019 Legal Updates; to Cannabis SB 35," American Planning Association California Chapter Northern, February 23, 2019
- Author, "AB 2923: BART transit-oriented housing legislation," Daily Journal's New Laws, January 9, 2019
- Co-Author, "Slate of New Housing Bills Take Effect," Wendel Rosen Client Update, January 3, 2018

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Co-Chair, Programs Committee, Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) – East Bay

- Member, Board of Directors, Bay Planning Coalition
- Chair, Government Affairs Committee, Bay Planning Coalition
- Member, Leadership Committee, Innovation Tri-Valley
- Member, Pro Visors
- Immediate Past Secretary and Former Board Member, Save Mount Diablo
- Member, Contra Costa Bar Association
- Member, Alameda County Bar Association

ADMISSIONS

- California