



AMARA L. MORRISON

Director

Land Use

Oakland

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“

When you get the chance to sit out or dance, I hope you dance.

- Maya Angelou

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AMARA L. MORRISON

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 a Board Member and Secretary 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 traveler and proud parent of her daughter, Islay, who attends Brandeis University.

EDUCATION

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

AREAS OF PRACTICE

OTHER EXPERIENCE

- Public Agency
- Transportation Agencies
- Land Use
- Real Estate
- Eminent Domain
- Government Relations & Regulatory

AWARDS AND HONORS

- *Best Lawyers in America*®, Land Use and Zoning Law, 2025
- *Northern California Super Lawyers*®, 2023
- "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

- Presenter, "Significant Legislative Changes," Contra Costa County Planning Directors, July 11, 2025
- Author, "YIMBY Challenges City of Cupertino's Alleged Violation of Builder's Remedy Project Processing," California Land Use Law and Policy Reporter, June 2025
- Speaker, "What is the New Role of Planning Commissioners," Cal Cities Planning Commissioner Academy, March 6, 2025
- Co-Author, "California Supreme Court Addresses When the Conveyance of Land Actually Amounts to a Subdivision," California Land Use Law And Policy Reporter, March 2025
- Co-Author, "[Legislative Update: California Adopts New Housing Laws](#)," Fennemore Blog, October 16, 2024
- Author, "[Fennemore attorney Amara Morrison provides update on evolving builder's remedy](#)," San Francisco Business Times, August 1, 2024

- Featured, "[Fennemore Proudly Celebrates Women's History Month](#)," Fennemore Blog, March 14, 2024
- Featuring, "Attorney Amara Morrison on builder's remedy, impact of the California housing crisis on employers," San Francisco Business Times, May 15, 2023
- 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

- Board Secretary, Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) – East Bay
- Member, Board of Directors, Bay Planning Coalition
- Co-Chair, Government Affairs Committee, Bay Planning Coalition
- Member, Leadership Committee, Innovation Tri-Valley
- Board Member, California Association of Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts
- Board Member and Executive Committee Member, Save Mount Diablo
- Member, Contra Costa Bar Association
- Member, Alameda County Bar Association

ADMISSIONS

• California