

Diana VARAT

Of Counsel

LOS ANGELES

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Drawing from her background in urban planning, Diana Varat has advised dozens of public agencies in California on complex land use and housing matters. Diana has extensive experience preparing and reviewing general plan updates, specific plans, and zoning code amendments. Since the State's passage of the 2017 Housing Package, Diana has focused her practice on compliance with California's housing-related land use laws, including Housing Element Law, the Housing Accountability Act, the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (SB 330), Density Bonus Law, No Net Loss, and streamlined housing approvals (SB 35). Diana frequently presents legislative updates to City staff, Planning Commissions, and City Councils to educate local officials on how best to comply with State law and simultaneously create vibrant communities. Diana has drafted numerous ordinances to implement housing element law on topics including: accessory dwelling units, inclusionary housing, density bonuses, emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing, and reasonable accommodations procedures.

As an expert in ethics laws, Diana helps public officials analyze potential conflicts of interest under the Political Reform Act and Government Code Section 1090. With her guidance, public officials have sought and received favorable advice from the Fair Political Practices Commission, allowing them to participate in agency decisions without violating California's conflict of interest laws.

In addition to her legal practice, Diana has served as a Lecturer in the Department of Urban Studies & Planning at California State University, Northridge and the Department of Urban Planning at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. She has taught courses on the legal foundations of planning, urbanization in the U.S., and the development of Los Angeles. In 2017, she advised a group of UCLA students in preparing their final project for the Masters degree, analyzing the community impacts of the LA River revitalization process

PRACTICE AREAS

Municipal & Public Agency
Law

FOCUS AREAS

Conflicts of Interest and Local
Government Ethics

Land Use Planning & Zoning
(Municipal)

EDUCATION

J.D., University of California,
Los Angeles School of Law

M.A., Urban Planning,
University of California, Los
Angeles

B.A., University of California,
Berkeley

along the Lower LA River.

WORK FOR CLIENTS

Diana previously served as the Assistant City Attorney for the cities of Agoura Hills and Manhattan Beach. In her role as Of Counsel to the firm, Diana now focuses on implementing State housing laws, conflicts of interest questions, and complex land use and planning projects for numerous cities, including Sunnyvale, La Habra, Beverly Hills, Rancho Cucamonga, Temecula, Davis, Redondo Beach, and Agoura Hills.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Before embarking on her law degree, Diana worked for the City Planning Department for the City of Dresden, Germany. Diana also previously served as the Project Associate for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars' Comparative Urban Studies Project in Washington, D.C.

HONORS & AWARDS

American Planning Association, Planning & Law Division Fellowship, 2006

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Member, American Planning Association

Vice-Director of Policy, 2010-2012, APA-LA

Member, Los Angeles County Bar Association

NEWS

Sober Living Homes May Challenge Zoning Regulations in Court

01.12.2023

Governor Signs New Housing and Parking Legislation

09.29.2022

The Housing Accountability Act Does Not Apply to an Application for a Single-Family Home

07.01.2022

City Approval of Density Bonus Project Upheld

02.14.2022

City's Denial of SB 35 Streamlining for Mixed-Use Project Overturned

05.10.2021

FPPC Revises the "Public Generally" Exception for Public Officials with Conflicts of Interest

10.07.2020

FPPC Revises Public Disclosure and Abstention Requirements for Public Officials with Conflicts of Interest

07.01.2020

New Rules for Conflicts of Interests Involving Sources of Income and Business Entities

10.01.2019

A New "500-Foot Rule" for Conflicts of Interest Involving Real Property Interests

03.22.2019

Governor Brown Signs SB 231 Regarding Stormwater Fees

10.23.2017

Governor's Housing Package

10.23.2017

Independent Contractors Potentially Subject to Liability Under California Conflict of Interest Laws

06.28.2017

Legislature Enacts Law To Encourage Urban Farming

01.16.2014

PRESENTATIONS

New Legislation: ADUs, SB 9, Density Bonus Law, and More (with Gabrielle Janssens)

Cal Cities Housing Practicum, 12.2024

New Legislation: Housing Accountability Act, Builder's Remedy, and Increased Penalties (with Barbara Kautz)

Cal Cities Housing Practicum, 11.21.2024

New Legislation - Lunch & Learn

Planning Directors Association of Orange County, 11.14.2024

Your Housing Element & HCD Enforcement: Happily Ever After Or Headed for Divorce
APA California Conference, 09.30.2024

2023 Legislative Update
American Planning Association, Orange County Section, 04.26.2023

Housing Everywhere All at Once: Navigating Complex Land Use Issues
CAALAC, 03.16.2023

2022 Legislative Update
American Planning Association, Orange County Section, 04.28.2022

Converging Emergencies: Housing & Land Use Equity
Municipal Law Institute, 03.05.2021

Completing Your Form 700 & Spotting Potential Conflicts of Interest
California Special Districts Association, 02.22.2021

Housing Element Updates & The Future of Housing Approvals
Association of California Cities – Orange County, 12.09.2020

SB 330 From the Trenches: How California's Housing Crisis Act Impacts Local Governments and Developers
LACBA, Land Use Planning and Environmental Subsection, 06.24.2020

2019 Legislative Update
American Planning Association, Orange County Section, 04.20.2020

Planning Law
LA-APA's AICP Exam Training Session, 04.04.2020

Zoning, Processing & Approving Housing Projects: A 2019 Legislative Update
Orange County City Attorneys' Association, 11.21.2019

Navigating Housing Development in a New Era
City Attorneys' Spring Conference, 05.09.2019

Planning Law
LA-APA's AICP Exam Training Session, 04.27.2019

2018 Legislative Update
American Planners Association, Orange County Section, 04.18.2019