

Russell J. Austin

Partner

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Practice Area(s): Corporate and Business, Nonprofits, Real Estate

Overview

Russell Austin has extensive experience in real estate and business law. He has planned, negotiated and documented a complete array of real property transactions and supporting documentation, including purchase and sale transactions, exchanges, syndications, partnership and LLC formations, and a wide variety of financing transactions for owners/developers, institutional and private lenders, conservation organizations and other non-profit organizations, and public agencies, including conservation transactions involving both fee acquisitions and conservation easements. Russell also has substantial experience in several aspects of real estate litigation, including complex foreclosure actions for lenders and borrowers.

Russell has been selected by Sacramento County Bar Association as the [*2017 Distinguished Attorney of the Year*](#), awarded each year to the attorney who “through the practice of law, has made Sacramento a better place to live and work.” He is listed in the 1997 through 2018 editions of *The Best Lawyers in America* as one of the Sacramento area’s outstanding real estate attorneys and from 2005 through 2017 he has been listed in *Northern California Super Lawyers*. Russell was named *Best Lawyers’ 2010 Sacramento Real Estate Lawyer of the Year* and was recognized in the *Top 100: 2016 and 2017 Northern California Super Lawyers* and the *Top 25: 2015 through 2017 Sacramento Super Lawyers* lists. He was named in the *Sacramento Business Journal’s* 2013 through 2017 “Best of the Bar” lists which recognize top local attorneys who have been nominated by their peers and vetted by a panel of their peers, and he was listed in *Sacramento Magazine’s* Top Lawyers List 2015 through 2017. Since 1992, Russell has been rated “AV Preeminent®” by Martindale-Hubbell. He leads the firm’s commercial real estate law team which was awarded “Tier One” rankings for practice excellence in the *U.S. News - Best Lawyers* “Best Law Firms” 2014 through 2018 reports.

Russell has served as a Visiting Professor of Law at King Hall School of



Memberships

- California State Bar Association (1980)
- American Bar Association (1980)
- Sacramento County Bar Association (1982)

Bar Admissions

- State Bar of California

Education

University of California, Berkeley
School of Law
J.D., 1980, Order of the Coif

University of California, Santa
Barbara
B.A., History, *summa cum laude*,

Law at the University of California, Davis, teaching Real Estate Finance, and as a Visiting Professor of Law at McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, teaching a “practicum course” in Commercial Real Estate Transactions. He has also served as an Adjunct Professor in the graduate tax program at the McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento, and was an Instructor at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. Russell was a contributing editor for *Real Estate Purchase and Sale Transactions* and *Organizing Corporations in California*, both published by the California Continuing Education of the Bar. He has been a frequent panel speaker and moderator at continuing education seminars on real estate law.

1974, Phi Beta Kappa

Russell has been active in a number of community organizations and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy and the Board of Directors for the Sacramento Sutter Club. He was recognized by the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce as its “Volunteer of the Year” for 2001.

Russell has also been active in the Sacramento County Bar Association, has served as Chair of the Voluntary Legal Services Program and President of Legal Services of Northern California. In 1992, Russell received a President’s Pro Bono Service award from the California State Bar and, in 1993, he received a *Pro Bono Publico* award from the American Bar Association. In 1994, Russell was recognized by the Sacramento County Bar Association as its Humanitarian of the Year.

Upon graduation from law school in 1980, Russell joined the San Francisco firm of Marron Reid, LLP and in 1982, helped open its Sacramento office. In 1999, Russell was one of the founding partners of Murphy Austin Adams Schoenfeld LLP, serving as its first Managing Partner from 1999 to 2001 and again from 2005 to 2007.

Russell received his B.A., *with highest honors*, from the University of California Santa Barbara, his J.D. from University of California, Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law, and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the Order of the Coif.

Awards

- Selected by Sacramento County Bar Association as the *Distinguished Attorney of the Year*, awarded each year to the attorney who “through the practice of law, has made Sacramento a

better place to live and work.” (2017)

- Named *The Best Lawyers in America's 2010 Sacramento Real Estate Lawyer of the Year* (2010)
- Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* (1997 through 2018 Editions)
- Listed as a Super Lawyer in *Northern California Super Lawyers* (2005-2017)
- Named to the Top 100: Northern California Super Lawyers (2016-2017)
- Named to the Top 25 list: Sacramento Super Lawyers (2015-2017)
- Named in the *Sacramento Business Journal's* “Best of the Bar” list (2013-2017)
- Named in *Sacramento Magazine's* Top Lawyers List (2015-2017)
- Fellow, American Bar Foundation
- Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Volunteer of the Year (2001)
- Sacramento County Bar Association Humanitarian of the Year (1994)
- American Bar Association *Pro Bono Publico* Award (1993)
- AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rating from Martindale-Hubbell (1992-Present)
- California State Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award (1992)
- Business Volunteer of the Year, Business Volunteers for the Arts (1991)

Leadership

- KVIE Public Television, Board of Directors (2015-Present)
- MERISTEM, Board of Directors (2015-Present)
- Lambda Alpha International (Sacramento Chapter), Board of Directors (2013-2015) (Membership Committee Chair)
- The Sutter Club, Board of Directors (2010-2012)
- Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Davis, Council Member, Dean's Advisory Council (2005-2008)
- Co-Chair of Flood Control Transition Team for Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson (2008-2009): Co-chaired volunteer team to brief

incoming Mayor Johnson on flood control protection issues, status of current flood control improvement projects and make recommendations on possible actions to expedite completion of such improvements

- Crocker Art Museum Association, Board of Directors (2001-2008), Chair of Building and Grounds Committee (2004-2008) (lead responsibility for negotiation and documentation of the agreements with the City of Sacramento and the design and constructions agreements for the Museum's \$100 million dollar expansion)
- Sacramento Valley Conservancy, Board of Directors (2002-2010), President (2004-2006), Vice President (2003-2004), Chair of Acquisitions Committee (2004-2010), focused on conservation transactions, preserving 4,000 acres of natural habitat located in the Cosumnes River/Deer Creek Watershed region, and the Elkhorn Basin Ranch in Yolo County.
- Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Board of Directors (2000-2003), Legal Counsel (1999); served on Executive Committee as Vice Chair of Community Development (2000-2003) and spearheaded Regional Arts Strategic Plan Task Force process and Co-Chaired team charged with implementing Task Force recommendations; chaired Blue Ribbon Task Force reporting on the Port of Sacramento; participated on Blue Ribbon Task Forces for reporting on funding for new River Cats baseball stadium and development of new sports/entertainment arena for Sacramento Kings; participated and led "issues" teams in numerous "Cap to Cap" and study mission visits to other cities
- Sacramento Public Library Foundation, Board of Directors (1999-2002)
- California Museum for History, Women & the Arts (formerly known as the Golden State Museum), Board of Directors (1997-2000)
- Boalt Hall Alumni Association, Board of Directors (1997-2000)
- Legal Services Trust Fund Commission, Commission Member (1994-1997); Commission Chair (1997)
- Legal Services of Northern California, Board of Directors (1988-1994); President (1989-1993)
- Voluntary Legal Services of Northern California, Board of Directors (1986-1992); Chair (1988-1992)

- Business Volunteers for the Arts, President (1993-1994); Board of Directors (1988-1994)
- Sacramento Barristers Association (formerly known as Sacramento Young Lawyers Association), Board of Directors (1984-1986)

Speaking Engagements

- Visiting Professor of Law, McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific (2014-2015)
- Visiting Professor of Law, King Hall School of Law, University of California, Davis (2010-2011)
- Presenter, Real Property Section of the Sacramento County Bar Association, Conservation Easements (2008)
- Panelist and Moderator, California Continuing Education of the Bar, Program on Real Property Purchase and Sale Agreements (1990-2006)
- Speaker, Real Property Section of Sacramento County Bar Association, Partnership Dissolutions (2003)
- Moderator and Panelist, California Commercial Real Estate Financing, Lorman Education Services (2001)
- Lecturer in Law, Real Estate Finance, University of California, Davis (1992-1994)
- Adjunct Professor, L.L.M in Taxation Program, McGeorge School of Law (1983-1989)
- Instructor, Hastings College of the Law, University of California (1981-1982)

Publications

- "[Russell Austin: The 2017 Distinguished Attorney of the Year](#)," by J. Scott Alexander, *Sacramento Lawyer Magazine* (November/December 2017)
- "[We All Need Help Sometimes: Why Russell Austin can't say no to community service](#)," by Dan Fost, *Northern California Super Lawyers* (August 2015)
- "[Foreclosures in California](#)," Co-authored with Real Estate Partner, Catherine Oh