

PARTNER

Russell J. Austin

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PRACTICE AREAS

Corporate and Business
Nonprofits
Real Estate

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*, 1974, Phi Beta
Kappa

ADMISSIONS

California

LEADERSHIP

NAIOP Board of Directors,
Member (2023-2024)

UC Davis Health Campaign
Board, Board Member
(2020)

KVIE Public Television,
Board of Directors
(2015-2018)

MERISTEM, Board of
Directors (2015-2018)

Lambda Alpha
International (Sacramento
Chapter), Board of
Directors (2013-2015)
(Membership Committee
Chair)

The Sutter Club, Board of

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.

In 2019, Russell received the *Conservation Impact Award* for excelling in environmental protection and making significant contributions toward advancing rangeland conservation. He was recognized as a *Centennial Fellow* in 2019 by the Sacramento County Bar Foundation for his “distinguished professional accomplishment and substantial civic involvement and philanthropy,” which has earned him a legacy as one of the “founding pillars of the Sacramento legal community.” He was selected in 2017 by the Sacramento County Bar Association as its *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.”

Russell is listed in 1997 through 2025 editions of *The Best Lawyers in America* as one of the Sacramento area’s outstanding real estate attorneys and he was named *Best Lawyers’ Sacramento Real Estate Lawyer of the Year* in 2010. He is listed in 2005 through 2024 editions of *Northern California Super Lawyers* for excellence in real estate law. He was recognized as one of the *Top 100: Northern California Super Lawyers*, 2016 through 2018, and as one of the *Top 25: Sacramento Super Lawyers*, 2015 through 2018 and again in 2020 through 2022. Since 1992, Russell has been rated “AV Preeminent” by Martindale-Hubbell.

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

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 construction 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

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*, 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.

Russell has 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.

Russell has also been active in a number of community organizations and currently serves on the Emeritus Board of Trustees of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy. He was recognized by the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce as its "Volunteer of the Year" for 2001.

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 University of California, Santa Barbara and earned his J.D. from University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

EXPERIENCE

Speaking Engagements

Including Teaching Engagements:

- Presenter, "Contracts – Do's and Don'ts and Helpful Tips to Avoid Litigation," Placer County Bar Association (April 2019)
- 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)

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)

MEMBERSHIPS

California State Bar Association

California Lawyers Association, Real Property Section

- 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 J. Austin – Sacramento County Bar Foundation Centennial Fellow (September 2018)
- "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 Catherine Oh

HONORS

- Awarded the *LAI Sacramento Capitol Award* for distinguished professional accomplishments in real estate and conservation law, along with substantial civic involvement and philanthropy, Lambda Alpha International (LAI) Land Economics Society, Sacramento Chapter (2024)
- Awarded the *Making the Difference Award* for loyal dedication and unwavering commitment, VLSP/Capital Pro Bono (2024)
- Listed in *The Best Lawyers in America, Real Estate Law* (1997 through 2025 Editions)
- Named *The Best Lawyers in America's 2010 Sacramento Real Estate Lawyer of the Year* (2010)
- Listed in *Northern California Super Lawyers, Real Estate* (2005-2024)
- Named in the Top 25 list: Sacramento Super Lawyers (2015-2018, 2020-2022)
- Named in the Top 100: Northern California Super Lawyers (2016-2018)
- Listed in *Sacramento/Sactown Magazine's Top Lawyers List, Real Estate* (2015-2024), Business/Corporate (2018-2022)
- *Conservation Impact Award Winner*, awarded to the individual who excels in environmental protection and makes significant contributions toward

American Bar Association
Sacramento County Bar
Association, Business and
Real Property Sections

advancing rangeland conservation, issued by California Rangeland Trust (2019)

- *Centennial Fellow* of the Sacramento County Bar Foundation, awarded to “attorneys at the pinnacle of achievement who, through distinguished professional accomplishment and substantial civic involvement and philanthropy, have earned a legacy as founding pillars of the Sacramento legal community.” (2018)
- Sacramento County Bar Association’s *Distinguished Attorney of the Year*, awarded each year to one attorney who “through the practice of law, has made Sacramento a better place to live and work.” (2017)
- Named in *Sacramento Business Journal’s* Best of the Bar List (2013-2019)
- Recipient of the *2017 Champion of Change Award*, awarded to those “who exemplify the core values of Saint John’s: Love, Courage, Effort, Gratitude, Respect, Community, and Growth” and go “above and beyond to support the mission of Saint John’s and the women and children working hard to break the cycle of homelessness, poverty, and dependence for good,” issued by Saint John’s Program for Real Change (2017)
- 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)
- Fellow, American Bar Foundation