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**KATHERINE
PHILIPPAKIS**

FARELLA BRAUN + MARTEL

SAN FRANCISCO

Katherine Philippakis has built her legal practice around one of California's most volatile industries. As a wine industry attorney, she navigates the complex intersection of land use, real estate and corporate law that defines the state's vineyard and winery sector.

"The wine business is one of the most enticing and exciting of California industries, and it's the focus of my practice," Philippakis said. Her work spans the full spectrum of wine industry operations, from property acquisitions to daily operational advice for wineries across California and beyond.

Philippakis describes herself as "a grape-to-glass wine practitioner," helping clients buy, sell, develop and operate luxury winery and vineyard properties. Her expertise extends beyond wine to include obtaining use permits and entitlements for agriculture, renewable energy, hospitality, commercial, industrial, and luxury residential projects.

The complexity of wine industry transactions often surprises even experienced practitioners. Philippakis recalls one particularly challenging deal involving a two-acre parcel near St. Helena that required intricate financial structuring due to the seller's tax obligations.

"Even though it was a vacant residential parcel, the deal required the most complicated set of escrow instructions I've ever had to draft -- and 23 closing documents," she said. The transaction involved a lot line adjustment and required careful

coordination to ensure tax payments while protecting her client's interests.

Despite recent challenges facing California's wine industry, Philippakis maintains an optimistic outlook. The sector has weathered economic downturns before, and she believes current market conditions may signal an approaching recovery.

"The wine industry has been going through a down cycle, and there has been a lot of negative press, suggesting that California's wineries are doomed," Philippakis said. However, her experience observing multiple economic cycles informs her perspective.

Recent market activity supports her optimism. Well-established buyers with strong financial positions have begun exploring vineyard acquisitions again, suggesting confidence in the market's future direction.

"Personally, I feel we're nearing the bottom of the market, and I'm starting to notice buyers looking at vineyards again," Philippakis said. While she expects continued market corrections, she remains confident in the industry's long-term viability.