



Steven L. Vettel

Of Counsel

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Steven Vettel is one of the San Francisco's leading land use attorneys, and represents residential, commercial and institutional developers, and property owners. He specializes in assisting his clients in obtaining governmental permits and other necessary entitlements for their real estate development projects. He also negotiates public/private real estate arrangements, such as development agreements and land disposition agreements, and has drafted and secured numerous general plan amendments and rezoning actions.

Steve has successfully represented several major developers in obtaining land use entitlements for the construction of some of the Bay Area's largest developments, including several high-rise residential towers in downtown San Francisco, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art expansion project, the Potrero and Sunnysdale HOPE-SF public housing reconstruction projects, and the University of California's University Village project in the City of Albany. In the face of tough opposition, he has obtained land use entitlements for redevelopment and improvement of several underutilized urban sites throughout the Bay Area, including shopping centers, closed schools, and underutilized religious facilities, often involving the rehabilitation or replacement of historic structures.

Steve also litigates land use disputes. He counsels clients on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance and defends his clients' environmental review documents in both administrative and judicial forums.

The San Francisco Bay Area has one of the country's most challenging entitlements environments. With over three decades of land use and development experience, Steve is one of the best-known and most effective attorneys in the city. He knows the decisionmakers, knows the consultants, and above all, really knows the city. He is a familiar and respected presence in San Francisco City Hall, and is a team leader, strategist, and high-level advisor who knows, above all, how to put together projects that work.

Distinctions

- *Chambers USA*, Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use (2011-2019)
- *Best Lawyers in America*, Use and Zoning Law (2021-2025)
- *International Who's Who of Business Lawyers* (Environmental Law)
- "Top 50 Development Lawyers" in 2014, *The Daily Journal*
- "Top 25 Land Use Leaders" in 2011, *The Daily Journal*
- Leading Lawyer - Land Use/Zoning, *Legal 500 United States*
- Hall of Fame, Land Use/Zoning, *Legal 500 United States* (2020)
- Northern California *Super Lawyers* in Land Use/Zoning since (2015-2023)

Memberships and Affiliations

- Board Member, Friends of San Francisco City Planning
- Director (and former Vice Chair), San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association

Services

- Land Use / Development
- Real Estate

Education

- University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (J.D., 1984)
- Stanford University (B.A., 1977)

Bar Admissions

- California

- Former Co-Chair, ACLU of Northern California's Lawyers Counsel
- Former Member, Executive Committee, San Francisco Housing Action Coalition
- Former Member, Action Plan Advisory Committee, San Francisco Planning Department
- Former Co-Chair, Diversity Committee, Farella Braun + Martel

Experience

San Francisco Transbay Parcel F Tower Approved

Represented the joint venture of Hines, Urban Pacific Development, and Goldman Sachs to secure approval for the construction of a 61-story, 800-foot tall mixed-use tower adjacent to the Transbay Terminal on Howard St. known as Transbay Parcel F. It will be the fourth-tallest building and second tallest residential tower in San Francisco.

3400 Cesar Chavez/555 Bartlett Street, San Francisco

In the face of well-organized opposition, we assisted Seven Hill Properties resist a CEQA appeal to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and obtain entitlements for a mixed-use project in San Francisco's Mission District.

Diamond Heights Shopping Center

Represented the seller of the 75,000-square-foot Diamond Heights Shopping Center in San Francisco.

San Francisco Overlook

We represented San Francisco Overlook Development in obtaining entitlements for its Crestmont Drive residential development in the Forest Knolls neighborhood of San Francisco located in Supervisorial District 7, and then assisted the team settle a lawsuit brought against the project by the adjacent homeowners association.

Parcel P and 55 Ninth Street, San Francisco

Representing AvalonBay Communities in obtaining entitlements for two large apartment developments in San Francisco's Hayes Valley and Mid-Market neighborhoods.

888 Brannan Street, San Francisco

Representing SKS Investments in converting an historic but obsolete industrial and showroom building to a state-of-the art technology office building in San Francisco's South of Market district.

Nob Hill Masonic Center, San Francisco

Assisted the Freemasons of California and concert promoter Live Nation in obtaining permits to reposition the historic Masonic Auditorium as a major concert venue, including the successful defense of several lawsuits challenging the approvals.

55 Laguna (UC Extension Site), San Francisco

After obtaining land use entitlements, including general plan amendments, rezoning and conditional use approvals for the 55 Laguna mixed-use development project located at the former University of California Berkeley Extension Campus in San Francisco, we prevailed in the Superior Court and Court of Appeal (unpublished decision) defending client AF Evans Development, Inc. in a CEQA lawsuit challenging the City of San Francisco's approvals for the project (*Save the Laguna Street Campus v. City and County of San Francisco, et al.*). 55 Laguna provides multifamily apartments, affordable senior units, public spaces, and retail space. The project includes a combination of new construction, the adaptive reuse of three historically

significant buildings and the demolition of two others, which was the focus of the litigation.

Mercy Housing California

We successfully represented Mercy Housing in defending the project entitlements for the San Lorenzo Senior Housing project, including prevailing in the Alameda County Superior Court and the California Court of Appeal (*Hancocks v. County of Alameda*).

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Represented SFMOMA in obtaining land use approvals for a major expansion of its facilities in the Yerba Buena district of San Francisco, including new galleries to display the Doris and Donald Fisher Collection. The project included the relocation of a City fire station off-site, acquisition of City property, air rights and right-of-way, and the replacement of two historic resources with the museum addition and new fire station.

333 Harrison Street, San Francisco

For Emerald Fund, Inc., obtained entitlements for a 300+ unit apartment project, fronted by a new public park, in San Francisco's emerging Rincon Hill neighborhood.

Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation

We have represented TNDC on numerous affordable housing projects in San Francisco, including the Rosa Parks II senior project in the Western Addition, the Kelly Cullen Community and the Eddy and Taylor Family Housing in the Tenderloin neighborhood. We are currently assisting TNDC in obtaining entitlements for the 909 Howard Street project in the South of Market neighborhood.

AvalonBay Communities/BRIDGE Housing Corporation – Balboa Reservoir Project

Land use and real estate counsel to a partnership of AvalonBay and BRIDGE Housing seeking to purchase a 13-acre vacant reservoir site from the City and County of San Francisco and develop an 1,100 unit mixed-income development, including negotiation of a land disposition agreement, general plan amendments, rezoning and development agreement.

America's Cup Pavilion, San Francisco

Represented Live Nation in defeating a last-minute appeal of the entertainment permit authorizing Live Nation to present a summer concert series in conjunction with the America's Cup sailing races in a temporary 9,000-seat pavilion at San Francisco's Piers 27/29.

Institute on Aging/BRIDGE Housing Corporation

Assisted the Institute on Aging and BRIDGE Housing Corporation in obtaining land use entitlements to demolish the vacant Coronet Theater in San Francisco's Richmond District and replace it with a mixed-use project containing two floors of health and social services for seniors and low-income senior rental units above. In the face of intense opposition from some immediate neighbors, we obtained unanimous votes from both the San Francisco Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, and successfully defended the project's EIR and use permit in San Francisco Superior Court.

Transbay Parcel F and Block 4 Projects

Counsel to a partnership of Hines, Goldman Sachs and Urban Pacific to entitle a 750-foot tall mixed use tower (office, hotel and residential) that will be the fourth tallest in San Francisco immediately adjacent to the under construction Transbay Terminal and a 550-foot residential tower nearby.

Grand Hyatt, Union Square, San Francisco

Assisted Hyatt Equities with defending the Grand Hyatt's favorable position in a limited queue of hotel rooms eligible for conversion to condominiums in the face of an appeal by UNITE HERE, the local hotel workers'

union.

555 Howard Street and 1125 Market Street

Counsel to Pacific Eagle, a Singapore based investor/developer, in obtaining land use entitlements for two hotel projects in San Francisco. 555 Howard is a 385-foot mixed hotel/residential tower in the Transbay District that will be the first commercial building in San Francisco designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop.

1500 Mission Street Project, San Francisco

Counsel to The Related Companies in obtaining environmental clearance, rezoning and land use entitlements for the 1500 Mission Street Project that will couple over 550 units of rental housing with a new office building and permit center to be design/built by Related for the City and County of San Francisco.

800 Brotherhood Way, San Francisco

Obtained entitlements for the subdivision of a large site near Lake Merced in southwestern San Francisco into 121 lots for the construction of 182 single-family homes and duplexes. After defeating an administrative appeal of the project's mitigated negative declaration, we successfully defended the project approvals in the Superior Court and California Court of Appeal, and successfully defended a separate Superior Court challenge to the City's issuance of a tree removal permit.

1066 Market Street, San Francisco

Counsel to Shorenstein Properties in obtaining land use entitlements for a 305-unit residential project in San Francisco's Mid-Market/Tenderloin neighborhood, including the drafting and negotiating of an ordinance authorizing a unique off-site affordable housing strategy in order to resolve an appeal of the project's permit.

Group I: 950 Market Street

Land use and real estate counsel to Group I in obtaining land use entitlements, including enactment of a special zoning exemption, for construction of a mixed use hotel/residential/retail project in San Francisco Mid-Market/Tenderloin neighborhood and negotiating a hotel services agreement.

8th and Harrison Street and 1000 16th Street, San Francisco

Counsel to Archstone in obtaining land use entitlements for two 400+ unit residential projects in San Francisco's South of Market and Potrero Hill districts.

Nick Podell Companies

In 2016, we obtained land use entitlements for a controversial residential project in San Francisco's Mission District at 2000 Bryant Street, dubbed the "Beast on Bryant" by project opponents, including obtaining a unanimous vote at the Board of Supervisors to reject an appeal of the project's CEQA exemption and large project authorization. We worked extensively with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development to fashion a land dedication alternative to satisfy the project's inclusionary housing obligation and enable MOHCD to build a 100% affordable development on a portion of the project site.

One Rincon Hill, San Francisco

Obtained the land use entitlements for our client Urban West Associates of San Diego to construct two high-rise residential towers atop San Francisco's Rincon Hill, one of 59 stories and the other of 47 stories, totaling 709 condominiums and townhouses. Our representation included negotiating a General Plan amendment and rezoning for the entire Rincon Hill area, obtaining a height limit increase from 200 feet to 550 feet, obtaining permits to demolish a historic structure on the site, negotiating a feasible impact fee package and the formation of a Mello-Roos community facilities district to finance those fees.

655 Folsom – Forton Fund

Provided land use advice for a residential project in San Francisco.

National Real Estate Advisors/Emerald Fund: 100 and 150 Van Ness Avenue

Representing an affiliate of a national construction trades pension fund in obtaining land use approvals to convert an obsolete San Francisco office building obtained in foreclosure to 400 rental apartments and construction next of an additional 420 units in a new building next door. After building permits were issued, we successfully defeated an appeal of a construction permit filed by an adjoining property owner.

Mercy Housing/Related California

We are land use counsel to Sunnydale Development Company, a joint venture of Mercy Housing California and Related California for the Sunnydale HOPE-SF public housing replacement project that will redevelop a dilapidated public housing site into a 1700-unit mixed income development, including replacement 1 for 1 of the public housing units. We assisted in preparation of the EIR/EIS, creation of a special use district, and the negotiation of a Development Agreement between the San Francisco Housing Authority, the City and Sunnydale Development Company.

BRIDGE Housing Corporation Public Housing Replacement Project

We are land use counsel to BRIDGE for the Potrero Terrace and Annex HOPE-SF public housing replacement project that will redevelop two dilapidated public housing sites into a 1700-unit mixed income development, including replacement 1 for 1 of the public housing units. We assisted in preparation of the EIR/EIS, creation of a special use district, and the negotiation of a Development Agreement between the San Francisco Housing Authority, the City and BRIDGE.

1150 Ocean Avenue, San Francisco

Assisted AvalonBay Communities in obtaining land use entitlements for a mixed-use project including 173 residential units and a grocery store. The project required a rezoning of the site and negotiation of an infrastructure "in-kind" agreement allowing the development to construct needed on-site infrastructure improvements in lieu of paying impact fees.

BRIDGE Housing Corporation Land Use Entitlements

We represent BRIDGE in obtaining land use entitlements for the 4840 Mission project in San Francisco, which like 250 Laguna Honda Boulevard, was awarded a Proposition A grant.

The Gas Light Building, San Francisco

Obtained both local landmark and conditional use authorization to add an interior floor and to make certain revisions to the exterior of the Gas Light Building in San Francisco.

Publications

April 23, 2021

California Court of Appeal Upholds Validity of SB 35 to Streamline Approval of Affordable Housing Projects

November 25, 2019

New California Housing Laws: AB 68 Accessory Dwelling Units

November 18, 2019

Newly Adopted California Housing Laws – Assembly Bill 1485 Streamlining the Permit Process for Housing Developments

November 11, 2019

Newly Adopted California Housing Laws - Senate Bill 330 Housing Crisis Act

October 28, 2019

Upcoming Changes to California Housing Laws – AB 1482 Tenant Protection Act

September 4, 2019

San Francisco COPA Program Rules Released

9/27/2017

California Legislature Responds to the State's Housing Crisis With Increased Funding, Streamlining, and Enforcement

7/12/2017

What You Need to Know About San Francisco's Inclusionary Affordable Housing Program

12/21/2015

California Supreme Court Rejects CEQA Guideline Requiring Analysis of the Existing Environment's Impacts on a Proposed Project

8/24/2015

Density Bonus Comes to San Francisco

6/18/2015

California Supreme Court Upholds Validity of Inclusionary Housing Ordinances

3/4/2015

California Supreme Court Strengthens CEQA's Categorical Exemptions

8/7/2013

San Francisco Takes Steps to Rationalize the CEQA Process

2/2/2011

Recent Developments in San Francisco Land Use Entitlements Procedures

3/24/2010

A Wake-Up Call For Cities And Counties To Meet Regional Housing Needs

3/15/2010

Changes To San Francisco's Inclusionary Housing Program For Rental Projects

7/27/2009

Subdivision Map Act Extension Bill (AB 333) Provides Relief from Map Deadlines

7/15/2009

Alert: The Formal Comment Period for the Climate Change-Related Amendments to the CEQA Guidelines is Now Open

7/1/2009

On the Hot Seat: Climate action plans become a new reality for California cities' long-term master plans and land-use document

4/27/2009

Historic Preservation Considerations In Infill Development

4/20/2009

Alert: OPR Sends Proposed CEQA Guideline Amendments to Resources Agency

1/21/2009

Alert: OPR Releases Draft Amendments to CEQA Guidelines to Incorporate Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

12/24/2008

San Francisco Land Use Updates

11/2/2008

Alert: CARB Releases Preliminary Draft of Recommended Approaches for Setting Significance Thresholds for Greenhouse Gases under CEQA

6/24/2008

Alert: Office of Planning and Research Releases Technical Advisory on CEQA and Climate Change

Outside the Office

Steve is a road bicyclist, a beach aficionado and a food and wine buff, which is a really good thing in San Francisco.