



Michael W. Shonafelt

Partner

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Michael W. Shonafelt is a partner in the Newport Beach office. He advises landowners, developers, lenders, receiverships, and public agencies on all zoning and land use matters, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), general/specific plan amendments, conditional use permits (CUPs), zone changes, subdivision maps, development agreements, wetlands issues and coastal development permits (CDPs).

His practice covers all phases of the real property entitlement process — from preparing the permit application to achieving final approval. He provides a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary level of service designed to most efficiently get projects to construction. He has represented clients before multiple local and state governmental bodies and in civil litigation in both state and federal courts. He is especially recognized for his special focus on providing land use and regulatory counsel to wireless telecommunications companies.

Zoning and Land Use: Michael has breadth and depth of experience in devising entitlement strategies for all categories of development: commercial, industrial, resort, office and residential. He has advised developers in such large mixed-use developments as the Hollywood Palladium Redevelopment Project and the Downey NASA Reuse Site as well as residential/resort projects, such as the final phase of Snow Creek in Mammoth. He has served as special land use counsel to the County of Monterey and the San Diego Unified Port District and has advised the Orange County Transportation Corridor Agencies on a range of issues. He also provides land use counsel to multiple homebuilder clients.

Wireless Telecommunications: Michael has assisted in the deployment of cell sites and distributed antenna systems not just in California — but throughout the nation. He has spoken and written extensively on land use issues facing wireless telecommunications companies and has been quoted frequently on issues related to wireless networks, including in Forbes magazine. He has successfully litigated many matters of first impression on wireless telecommunications land use issues in both federal and state court.

CEQA and NEPA: As part of his land use practice, Michael has extensive expertise in developing strategies for compliance with CEQA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). He has led multi-disciplinary teams in the development of environmental impact reports (EIRs) and environmental impact statements (EISs) and has successfully litigated CEQA and NEPA issues.

Coastal Act: Michael has represented clients before the California Coastal Commission on a range of issues and has litigated Coastal Act issues, including issues pertaining to the scope of the Commission's jurisdictional authority and issues pertaining to coastal development permits (CDPs).

Prior to joining Newmeyer Dillion as a partner in 2011, Michael held partner positions at Allen Matkins and Nossaman, LLP. He is an Eagle Scout and past member of the Board of Directors of the Boy Scouts of America, Orange County Council and the Board of Directors of the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County, CA. He also served as a founding member of the Board of Directors of the California Wireless Association. Prior to practicing law, Michael spent seven years as a bilingual educator in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He has frequently lectured on constitutional law to undergraduates at the University of California, Irvine, and the University of Southern California.

While in law school, Michael studied with Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist in Loyola's summer program at Trinity College, Cambridge, England. He holds two bilingual education credentials from the State of California and is fully fluent in Spanish.

Services

- CEQA
- Eminent Domain & Real Estate Valuation
- Environmental
- Resource Law
- Wireless Telecommunications & Broadband
- Zoning and Land Use – Entitlements & Litigation

Professional Affiliations

- Orange County Bar Association
- Los Angeles County Bar Association
- California Wireless Association

Admissions

- California, 1996

Education

- Loyola Law School, Los Angeles (J.D., 1996)
 - Loyola Law Review

- California State University, Dominguez Hills(M.A., 1992)
- California State University, Dominguez Hills(B.A., 1989)
- St. Michael's Abbey of Nobertine Fathers(1987)

Publications

Calif. Case Shows Propriety Of Telecom CEQA Exemptions

Published Article

FCC Takes Bold Steps to Win Race to 5G

News

Dec 06, 2019 - Firm News

Newmeyer Dillion Secures Victory for Crown Castle in Years-Long Litigation With City Council of Piedmont Over Small Cell Wireless Telecommunications Sites

Aug 07, 2019 - Media Coverage

Things Are Getting Desperate in the 5G Small Cell Sector

Events

When: Jan 23, 2020

ND 2020 Annual Seminar

When: Sep 27, 2019

Making it Through the Land Entitlement Process - Live Webinar

When: Feb 14, 2018

Newmeyer Dillion's 2018 Builder Update

Location: The Pacific Club