

PARTNER

Matthew Richardson

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(949) 263-6562 Irvine

Matthew “Mal” Richardson advises public and private clients on issues related to regulatory and land use law, with a focus on complex land transactions, the First Amendment, election and campaign law, and municipal governance.

City Attorney and General & Special Counsel
Mal is the city attorney for the cities of Lake Forest, Signal Hill and Stanton. He also serves as special counsel for numerous public agencies throughout California, including cities, counties, and special districts. He provides advice on regulatory issues, land use matters, the First Amendment and election law. Mal has also served as general counsel for the Association of California Cities since 2012. He regularly presents ethics training to public officials.

First Amendment and Election Law
Much of Mal’s work focuses on navigating the complexities of the First Amendment on behalf of public and private clients. Mal has drafted numerous sign codes, revamped election sign laws in the wake of *Reed v. Gilbert*, and advised public and private clients on advertising and digital media. Mal also provides regular guidance on free speech in public and non-public venues and the interplay of government regulation and private speech rights, as well as public camping and homeless issues.

Mal also serves as general and special counsel to public agencies on election and campaign laws. His experience includes drafting ballot measures, advising on the proper use of public funds in campaigns, and providing ongoing counsel throughout the campaign and election process.

Complex Land Use and Development
Mal also has extensive experience in complex land use issues. Since 2010, Mal has served as lead counsel for the Opportunities Study Project, a large-scale commercial, residential and mixed-use project in Lake Forest, involving the rezoning and development of more than 900 acres. He coordinates BBK’s service teams to acquire and consolidate real estate, review environmental impacts, obtain state and federal permits and licenses, assure water availability and meet affordable housing goals. With experience as counsel for both public and private entities, Mal employs a collaborative approach to the land use and entitlement process.

CORE PRACTICES

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Open Government & Ethics

Municipal Law

Housing, Economic Development and Real Estate

Election Law

Special Districts

Business

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

University of California, Los Angeles School of Law, J.D.

Brigham Young University, M.A., comparative literature

Brigham Young University, B.A., comparative literature

Bar Admissions

California

He also served as a land use and regulatory law instructor for the University of California, Irvine Extension.

Mal and his wife Melissa stay busy raising four daughters and two sons.

Accolades

- The Best Lawyers in America®, Land Use and Zoning Law & Municipal Law, 2019 – 2024, 2027
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Lawyer of the Year, Municipal Law, 2022, 2024, 2026
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Lawyer of the Year, Land Use and Zoning, 2021, 2026
- *Super Lawyers Southern California Rising Star*, State, Local and Municipal, 2013-2015

Thought Leadership

Publications

- "Federal Voting Rights Act Changes Could Impact your Local Election," *Western City Magazine*, Sept. 3, 2026
- “U.S. Supreme Court Reshapes Voting Rights Act Landscape in Louisiana v. Callais,” *PublicCEO*, May 8, 2026
- “The Role of City Attorneys: BBK Municipal Law Attorneys Discuss on the Air,” *BBKnowledge*, Mar. 20, 2015
- “Public Officials and Agencies: To Campaign or Not to Campaign?,” *BBKnowledge*, Sept. 8, 2014

Presentations

- "Campaign Season and City Hall: Staying Legal, Ethical, and Out of Trouble," League of California Cities Annual Conference, Sept. 24, 2026
- “Read All About It (Or Not): Legal Publication Requirements in a Digital Age,” League of California Cities City Clerks New Law and Elections Seminar, Nov. 12, 2025
- “Building Strong City Clerk-City Attorney Relationships: A Foundation for Effective Governance,” City Clerks Association of California Annual Conference, May 1, 2025
- “Building Support for Ballot Measures: Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the 2024 Election,” Institute for Local Government Webinar, Dec. 3, 2024
- “Voting Rights in California,” Association of California Water Agencies Election Law Webinar, Sept. 21, 2022
- “Redistricting 101: What Cities Need to Know,” Institute for Local Government Webinar, June 30, 2021
- “Redistricting 2021 - You Can't Explore a New World with an Old Map,” City Clerks Association of California's Annual Conference, Apr. 20, 2021
- “You Aren't Lewis & Clark - You Need a Map! 2021 Public Agency Redistricting Strategies,” BBK Workshop via Webinar, Mar. 18, 2021
- “Demonstrations and the Changing Face of Public Speech in the United States: A View from the End of Apartheid in South Africa,” BBK Webinar, Oct. 8, 2020
- “Constitutional Potholes in the Post-COVID Resilience Roadmap,” International Municipal Lawyers Association's Annual Conference, Sept. 30, 2020
- “Reopening During the Coronavirus Pandemic: How to Serve the Public and Avoid Liability,” Webinar, Association of California Cities, July 8, 2020
- “Reopening During the Coronavirus Pandemic: How to Serve the Public and Avoid Liability,” BBK Webinar, June 11, 2020

- “Planning, Zoning, and Development Law: What’s New from California’s Judicial and Legislative Branches?” UCLA Extension Public Policy Program's 34th Annual Land Use Law & Planning Conference, Jan. 24, 2020
- “Planning, Zoning and Development Law,” UCLA Extension Public Policy Program's 33rd Annual Land Use Law and Planning Conference, Jan. 18, 2019
- “Hotels in the Neighborhood: How Municipalities are Addressing Airbnb Vacation Rentals, Group Homes and Other Transitory-Lodging Uses into Residential Districts,” International Municipal Lawyers Association Annual Conference, Oct. 17, 2017
- “Records Related to Public Business, But Not Controlled by Third Parties,” The State Bar of California Public Law Section’s California Public Records & Open Meeting Conference, June 9, 2015
- “Ethics and Conflicts of Interest in the Land Use Approval Process: Guidance for Public and Private Planners, Attorneys and Development Principals,” American Planning Association California Chapter’s Conference, Sept. 15, 2014
- “Records Management - Necessary Steps for Transparency, Compliance and Business Continuity Planning,” CALAFCO Staff Workshop 2012, Apr. 26, 2012