

AMRIT S. KULKARNI

PRINCIPAL

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LANGUAGES:
English



Steering California's largest infrastructure and goods-movement projects from entitlement through litigation.

Amrit Kulkarni serves as development counsel for some of the most significant development projects in California. He has a deep understanding the goods movement industry and has spent over two decades representing private sector clients and government entities throughout the state.

Amrit has extensive experience navigating the legal and political complexities needed to bring large development projects to fruition. He regularly advises clients on emerging laws, new project delivery options, and evolving policy issues.

Amrit's work encompasses some of the state's most iconic projects. He is implementing multibillion-dollar programs at the [Port of Los Angeles](#) and [LAX](#), advancing large-scale water supply infrastructure throughout the state of California, and helping implement a multibillion-dollar housing program for the University of California system. He also represents BNSF on multiple large-scale rail development projects throughout the state, including the [Barstow International Gateway \(BIG\)](#), the first transportation project the Governor ever certified for expedited review under SB 149, a \$4.5 billion project that will move containers straight from ships at the Port of Los Angeles onto trains bound for the rest of the nation.

Amrit has secured published decisions before the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal and has spent more than a decade steering the firm from its Executive Committee. His work in and out of the court room reflects the depth of his experience, relationships, and collaborative leadership style across California.

HONORS & AWARDS

EDUCATION

Northwestern School of Law of
Lewis and Clark College, JD, 1998

University of California, Santa Cruz,
BA, Environmental Studies / Policy
and Planning, 1994

ADMISSIONS

California, 1999 – Bar No. 202786

U.S. District Court, Northern District
of California

U.S. District Court, Central District
of California

U.S. District Court, Eastern District
of California

U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit

Supreme Court of the United States

PRACTICE AREAS

Land Use & Environmental

Air Quality

CEQA/NEPA

Climate Change & Sustainability

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- “Best Lawyers in America, Litigation – Land Use and Zoning” – Best Lawyers (2018–2027)
 - Top 100 Lawyers, *Daily Journal* (2026)
 - “Chambers Spotlight California 2026 Guide” – Environment and Real Estate: Zoning/Land Use, Los Angeles (2025–2026)
 - “Southern California Super Lawyers list: Environmental Litigation and Land Use/Zoning” – Super Lawyers Magazine (2017–2026)
 - “Leaders of Influence: Minority Attorneys” – Los Angeles Business Journal (2023, 2025)
 - “Northern California Super Lawyers list: Environmental Litigation and Land Use/Zoning” – Super Lawyers Magazine (2012–2024)
 - “Top 50 Development Lawyers” – Daily Journal (2014)
 - “Leading Environmental Practices” – The Recorder (2012)
 - “Top 20 Under 40 Lawyers” – Daily Journal (2011)
 - “Top Land Use Leaders” – Daily Journal (2011)

Energy, Utilities & Renewables

Hazards & Remediation

Land Entitlements

Wildlife & Natural Resources

Trial & Litigation

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

Amrit is widely respected across California’s legal and development communities for the depth of his relationships, his collaborative leadership style, and his long-standing commitment to mentoring attorneys and advancing the profession. He leads one of the firm’s core practice groups, overseeing strategy, operations, professional development, and client service across California.

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- Executive Committee, Meyers Nave, Member (2016–Present)
 - Propeller Club of Los Angeles and Long Beach, Member (2025–Present)
 - Pacific Merchant Shipping Association (2024–Present)
 - Environmental Law Section, California Lawyers Association, Member
 - The State Bar of California, Member
 - Urban Water Institute, Member
 - League of California Cities, Member
 - California Special Districts Association, Member
 - American Planning Association, California Chapter, Member
 - California Association of Environmental Professionals, Member

REPRESENTATIVE EXPERIENCE

[BNSF Railway](#). Lead outside counsel to the nation's largest freight railroad on the projects rebuilding how California's goods move.

- **Barstow International Gateway (BIG)** – Lead counsel on a \$4.5 billion, 4,500-acre integrated rail facility in Barstow, the first such facility a Class I railroad has ever built, spanning CEQA, NEPA, Endangered Species Act, and Clean Water Act issues. It is the first transportation project the Governor certified for expedited review under SB 149, cutting the window for CEQA challenges from as long as five years to roughly 270 days. Approved by the Barstow City Council on June 16, 2026, and projected to remove about one million truck hauls a year from California roads.
- **Southern California International Gateway (SCIG)** – Counsel on a \$700 million project moving imported containers from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to a new near-dock rail yard, eliminating an estimated 1.3 million short-haul truck trips a year and requiring replacement of a historically significant bridge over the Dominguez Channel. Lead litigation counsel in seven consolidated lawsuits and the appeals that followed, spanning CEQA, environmental justice, and federal preemption.
- **Needles Third Main Track** – Appealed a Regional Water Quality Control Board denial of a Clean Water Act Section 401 certification for a third main track along 30 miles of corridor west of Needles, arguing the statute's plain language, controlling case law, new federal rulemaking, and preemption of state preclearance for freight rail improvements. The revised application was approved.
- **California High-Speed Rail Partnership** – Advising on a prospective partnership with the California High-Speed Rail Authority to run passenger service between Los Angeles Union Station and the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center.

[Port of Los Angeles \(POLA\)](#). Lead counsel to the Port since 2006 on environmental review, permitting, and litigation across its container terminals and master planning, including the Port Master Plan Update.

- **China Shipping Container Terminal (Berths 97-109)** – Defended the Port's certification of the China Shipping EIR in the trial and appellate courts against a CEQA challenge by the City of Riverside, carried the 2019 SEIR through certification, and now defends the certification against the suits attacking the SEIR's air quality analysis and the enforceability of its mitigation.
- **Yang Ming Container Terminal / West Basin Redevelopment (Berths 121-131)** – Ongoing counsel on the joint EIR and EIS for the terminal expansion, spanning CEQA, NEPA, Coastal Act, State Lands, air quality, greenhouse gas, transportation, and mitigation issues.

[Los Angeles Department of Water and Power \(LADWP\)](#). Primary outside land use and environmental counsel to the largest municipal utility in the United States, across more than 25 significant matters.

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- **Owens Lake Dust Control** – Air quality and environmental counsel on a multi-billion-dollar dust control program covering thousands of acres of Bureau of Land Management land, including State Implementation Plan analysis, CEQA and NEPA review, consultation with tribal groups and federal wildlife agencies, and the access and lease agreements that let the program proceed.
 - **County of Mono v. City of Los Angeles** – Led the appeal that overturned a trial court ruling subjecting the Department's yearly water allocations to Mono County ranchers to fresh CEQA review. The Court of Appeal held the allocations were actions in furtherance of the 2010 lease approvals, leaving the Department free to manage its water without annual litigation.
 - **Great Basin Litigation** – Representing the Department in multi-jurisdictional litigation, an appeal plus three trial court cases, over an air district's attempt to compel a dust-control project on lands with significant Tribal cultural resources, with tens of millions of dollars in penalties sought for alleged non-compliance (as of mid-2026).
 - **Statewide Rates and Charges Litigation** – Defending the Department's position in the San Diego County Water Authority's statewide challenge to the Metropolitan Water District's imported-water rates, a dispute worth millions in past and future charges.
 - **Elysian and Stone Canyon Reservoirs** – Counsel on the CEQA review of the water quality improvement projects that bring the two open reservoirs up to current EPA drinking water standards, including the City Council appeal over certification of the Elysian Reservoir EIR.

[University of California](#). Lead land use and environmental counsel to the University for more than a decade on capital development and public-private partnership projects systemwide, with CEQA work spanning nearly every UC campus.

- **Multi-Campus Long Range Development Planning** – Lead counsel on the new LRDPs and EIRs for UC Davis, UCLA, UC Merced, UC Santa Cruz, and UC San Diego, the blueprints governing decades of campus growth, enabling tens of thousands of additional students through millions of square feet of housing, healthcare, academic, and research space.
- **People's Park Student Housing** – Advised in connection with the unanimous 2024 California Supreme Court victory clearing UC Berkeley's housing project at People's Park, more than 1,100 student beds plus 125 affordable and supportive beds, with the Court holding that social noise from residents falls outside CEQA and confirming the broad reach of AB 1307.
- **Merced 2020** – Counsel on implementation of a public-private master development plan built to accommodate growth from 6,800 to 10,000 students, including utility and transportation agreements with the City and County of Merced and the agreements implementing wetland mitigation requirements.
- **Meyer and Renee Luskin Conference and Guest Center** – A series of trial and appellate victories defeating CEQA, zoning, and taxation challenges to the \$162 million conference center, including *Save Westwood Village v. Luskin* (2014) 233 Cal.App.4th

135. Related university work includes the successful defense of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in litigation over the EIR for a new Solar Energy Research Center, one of the first EIRs to grapple with the effects of nanoparticle research.

San Mateo County Transit District – \$2 Billion Commuter Rail Public-Private Partnership. Lead land use and environmental counsel to the private partner in a public-private partnership with the transit district to develop a new commuter rail corridor between Silicon Valley and the East Bay, including local, state, and federal permitting.

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) – BART Silicon Valley. Land use and environmental counsel since 2011 on plans to extend rail transit into the South Bay and Silicon Valley, including the multi-phase, six-station extension from Fremont through San Jose to Santa Clara, spanning CEQA and NEPA review, Clean Water Act Section 404 permits, and Federal Transit Administration coordination. Defeated a CEQA action challenging the supplemental EIR, and advised on ground leases of VTA property for affordable housing.

City of Anaheim. Strategic land use, environmental, and transactional counsel on the projects reshaping the Platinum Triangle and the Anaheim Resort.

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- **Big A 2050** – Lead land use and CEQA counsel for the mixed-use redevelopment of the Angel Stadium site, spanning a Disposition and Development Agreement, site plans, tentative maps, and the approvals designed to keep Major League Baseball in Anaheim for the next 30-plus years.
 - **DisneylandForward** – Served in a supervising and strategic role on the first update to the Disneyland Resort's development blueprint since the 1990s, backed by Disney's commitment to invest at least \$1.9 billion over the next decade, guiding the entitlements through General Plan and Specific Plan amendments and the Supplemental EIR.
 - **ocV!BE** – Land use and environmental counsel for the entitlement and CEQA process on the \$4 billion, 95-acre entertainment district around the Honda Center, 1,500 residences, offices, shopping, and 20 acres of parks, entitled on schedule for the Phase One opening in 2026.
 - **Angel Stadium Transactions** – Counsel on the proposed sale of the stadium property, resolving contractual issues, and lead real estate transaction counsel on the sale of the City's air-space subdivision interest in jointly owned property, completing a transaction the City had pursued for years.

Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink) – Tunnel 26. Represented the commuter rail system in responding to an order of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board on the dewatering system at Tunnel 26 near Chatsworth, an activity the Board had not previously regulated. Related work covers CEQA compliance and Clean Air Act conformity for new and expanded transportation facilities.

City of Los Angeles – The Boring Company Test Tunnel. Defended the City's decision to permit an initial test track for the underground transportation tunnels proposed by Elon

Musk, against neighborhood groups arguing that the test tunnel required environmental review of an entire citywide network, and reached an expedited settlement that let the project proceed.

[Los Angeles World Airports \(LAWA\)](#). Cornerstone environmental counsel to LAWA for more than a decade, from the LAX Master Plan through the projects now modernizing the airport.

- **LAX Master Plan** – Counsel on development and implementation of the \$14 billion Los Angeles International Airport Master Plan, including defense of four consolidated lawsuits alleging NEPA, CEQA, and California Coastal Act violations, and continuing work on the projects tiered from it, among them the South Airfield Improvement Project, the Northside Plan Update, and the Tom Bradley International Terminal reconfiguration.
- **Airfield and Terminal Modernization Program and Air Cargo Modernization** – Advising on the modernization program's airfield enhancements, new terminal facilities, and improved central-terminal roadways, and counsel on the redevelopment of the air cargo facilities along the Century Boulevard corridor to expand throughput while retaining and creating regional jobs.
- **Regulatory Defense** – PFAS groundwater proceedings before the State Water Resources Control Board and air quality regulatory work across airport operations.

Refineries, Terminals and Pipelines – Air Quality Compliance. Air quality and CEQA counsel to refineries and their associated terminals and pipelines, including appeal and variance petitions before the South Coast Air Quality Management District that secured dozens of long-pending permit revisions within weeks, source and facility determinations under California Air Resources Board greenhouse gas programs, and fence-line monitoring.

Mitch Kapur and Freada Kapur-Klein – Berkeley Hillside Preservation v. City of Berkeley. Represented the homeowners in litigation news coverage described as the biggest CEQA case the California Supreme Court would consider. The Court held that unusual circumstances are required before an otherwise categorically exempt project becomes subject to CEQA, set the two-part test for evaluating that claim, and resolved a split among the Courts of Appeal on the standard of review.

City of Sacramento – Downtown Arena and Mixed-Use Development. Beat every legal challenge to the Sacramento Kings' \$535 million downtown arena, completing all CEQA litigation inside the 270 days a new statute allowed and trying an 11-day case alleging collusion, fraud, secret subsidies, and illegal expenditure of public funds. The matter produced *Saltonstall v. City of Sacramento* (2014) 231 Cal.App.4th 1437, the first appellate decision to uphold the constitutionality of a project-specific CEQA streamlining statute, and *Saltonstall* (2015) 234 Cal.App.4th 549.

Crossroads of the World and 8150 Sunset Boulevard – Hollywood and the Sunset Strip. Prevailed at trial in expedited CEQA litigation over the Crossroads of the World redevelopment, a transit-oriented project of 950 residential units, a 308-room hotel, and

190,000 square feet of commercial space certified under AB 900 for a compressed 270-day schedule on a site that preserves 1930s buildings where F. Scott Fitzgerald and Alfred Hitchcock worked. Also defeated four CEQA challenges to the Frank Gehry-designed 8150 Sunset Boulevard mixed-use project.

PUBLISHED DECISIONS

- *County of Mono v. City of Los Angeles* (2022) 81 Cal.App.5th 657
- *City of Long Beach v. City of Los Angeles* (2018) 19 Cal.App.5th 465
- *Berkeley Hillside Preservation et al. v. City of Berkeley et al.* (2015) 60 Cal.4th 1086
- *Berkeley Hillside Preservation et al. v. City of Berkeley et al.* (2015) 241 Cal.App.4th 943
- *Saltonstall v. City of Sacramento* (2015) 234 Cal.App.4th 549
- *Saltonstall v. City of Sacramento* (2014) 231 Cal.App.4th 1437
- *Save Westwood Village v. Luskin* (2014) 233 Cal.App.4th 135
- *Concerned Dublin Citizens v. City of Dublin* (2013) 214 Cal.App.4th 1301
- *Community Water Coalition v. Santa Cruz County Local Agency Formation Commission* (2011) 200 Cal.App.4th 1317
- *Las Lomas Land Company, LLC v. City of Los Angeles* (2009) 177 Cal.App.4th 837
- *Ailanto v. City of Half Moon Bay* (2006) 142 Cal.App.4th 572
- *City of Goleta v. Superior Court* (2006) 40 Cal.4th 270
- *Northern California River Watch v. City of Healdsburg* (2006) 457 F.3d 1023
- *City of Half Moon Bay v. Superior Court* (2003) 106 Cal.App.4th 795
- *Berkeley Keep Jets Over the Bay Committee v. Board of Port Commissioners* (2001) 91 Cal.App.4th 1344