


W. Stephen Wilson


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Steve is of counsel in the real estate team.

Steve Wilson has 46 years of continuous experience in transactional real estate law.

He also has substantial experience in corporate, general business and non-profit law. He has held the esteemed Martindale-Hubbell “AV” (“preeminent”) peer designation for many years.

In the superheated West Coast real estate environment, he augments his technical knowledge by providing the business judgment and perspective that a seasoned institutional real estate executive would provide. Much of his current professional focus is on complex, value-added urban mixed-use projects and joint ventures, with recent focus on project planning in Qualified Opportunity Zones. Another and longtime focus is assisting nonprofit or charitable organizations (including religious organizations) seeking to monetize their land holdings in a way which incorporates a charitable or public benefit. Steve’s clients routinely comment that he is “their other partner”.

Other significant capabilities include real estate tax issues, entity formation/asset management for portfolio owners, restructuring and securitization of holdings, entitlement work, purchases and sales, commercial leasing and title matters. Many clients are offshore investors who benefit greatly from his guidance. In the corporate and general business realm, he has successfully handled numerous mid-market merger and acquisition transactions as well as formation and capitalization advice for many start-up and growth stage companies.

Steve has been an expert witness in two recent, significant jury trials involving real estate issues. In the recent past, he advised a major state-controlled Vietnamese bank in its successful first business venture in the U.S., advised the country’s national airline and advised a PRC state-owned real estate investment entity.

Steve has traveled widely on business in Asia, and for 10 years led post-Perestroika humanitarian orphanage support work in the Ryazan region of CIS. His humanitarian endeavors have also included Africa and South

America. In 2013, he lectured Chambers of Commerce throughout Indonesia on trade with the US. In 2017, he was a member of the San Francisco Mayor's economic and trade delegation to Vietnam.

Track record

Real estate industry influencer

Earlier in his career, Steve actively litigated for property owners and real estate professionals, and was responsible for decisions which heavily influenced the real estate industry.

Residential real estate disclosure

Easton v. Strassburger (1984) 152 Cal. App. 3d 90, established the modern standard for residential real estate disclosure.

Downzoning

Twain Harte Associates, Ltd. v. County of Tuolumne (1990) 217 Cal. App. 3d 71, is one of the most-cited cases in the area of downzoning.

Residential rent withholding orders

Floystrup v. City of Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board (1990) 219 Cal. App. 3d 1309 ended the overreaching practice of 'administrative' residential rent withholding orders without the due process protections of notice and hearing.

Synapse for West Coast real estate practice

Since joining Withers, Steve has been the synapse for its West Coast real estate practice, fielding questions and handling needs of dozens of Withers partners around the world. He adds value through 'cultural competence', the quality of responding to client requirements from diverse cultures sensitively and appropriately. This is the product of a lifetime of charitable and business endeavors around the world.

Talks

- 'Qualified Opportunity Zones After Four Years: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly,' CalCPA Real Estate Conference, Burlingame, CA, November 2021
- 'A Top-Down View of US Real Estate Acquisition by Offshore Investors,' CalCPA International Tax Committee (ITAX), San Francisco, CA, August 2017
- Qualified Opportunity Zones (18 presentations since October 2018)

External publications

'[A new path forward for surplus land owners in California](#),' Withers Insight - November 22, 2023, [Law360](#) - November 17, 2023, authored

'Qualified Opportunity Zones: Promise Remains (Or Does It?)' Thomson Reuters' Taxation of Exempts - November/December 2020, co-author

'[Qualified Opportunity Zones: Promise Remains \(Or Does It?\)](#)' Thomson Reuters' Practical Tax Strategies - November 2020, co-author

'[California's Proposition 15 to impact owners of non-exempt commercial and industrial real estate](#),' Withers Insight - October 26, 2020, co-author

'[Direct Leasing Could Make Subleasing Issues Worse](#),' GlobeSt.com - October 14, 2020, quoted

'[Available Sublease Space Continues to Grow](#),' GlobeSt.com - August 27, 2020, quoted

'[COVID-19: Opportunities for Prospective Tenants](#),' Withers Insight - July 30, 2020, co-author

'[The Art Market Adjusts: Guidance for gallery tenants in the US and UK](#),' Withers Insight - March 27, 2020, co-author

'[Nonprofits Partner to Assemble Andreotti Farm](#),' Half Moon Bay Review - June 4, 2019, quoted

Admissions

State of California, 1973

US Tax Court

9th Circuit Court of Appeals

US District Court, Northern District of California

US District Court, Central District of California

US District Court, Southern District of California

US District Court, Eastern District of California.

Education

Stanford University, B.A.

University of California, Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law, J.D.

Languages

English

Memberships

Stanford Professionals in Real Estate (formation team, charter member)

Board Member, Asian Pacific American Heritage (APAH) Foundation

Board Member, HealthRight 360 Foundation

San Francisco Bar Association and Real Property Section

California Bar Association

California Lawyers Association and Real Property Section

Chairman, Board of Trustees, Community United Methodist Church of Half Moon Bay

Key dates

Year joined: 2015

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