

PARTNER

Sonia Rubio Carvalho

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Irvine

Sonia R. Carvalho is a partner in the Municipal Law practice group of Best Best & Krieger LLP. She serves as city attorney for the City of Santa Ana. She also served as city attorney of Claremont (1999-2017), Azusa (1998-2012), Colton (1998-2001) and Yorba Linda (2001-2010).

As general counsel to municipal corporations, Sonia advises on all aspects of municipal law, but focuses on land use, ethics, open government and elections law.

Sonia is a frequent speaker on topics related to ethics, the Brown Act and land use issues. She instructs on various Continuing Education of the Bar land use and real estate courses, and writes and speaks on the topic of medical marijuana and land use regulation.

Sonia is a co-chair of BBK's Culture & Community Committee. During law school, she served as editor-in-chief of the *Chicano-Latino Law Review*.

Accolades

- The Best Lawyers in America®, Lawyer of the Year, Municipal Law, 2020, 2023, 2025, 2027
- The Best Lawyers in America®, Land Use and Zoning Law and Municipal Law, 2016–2025, 2027
- *Southern California Super Lawyers*, Women's Edition, 2023
- *Southern California Super Lawyers*, State, Local and Municipal, 2009, 2011, 2014-2026
- Top Women Lawyers, *The Daily Journal*, 2021
- Municipal Law Lawyer of the Year in Irvine, Best Lawyers®, 2020
- Orange County's top lawyers, *OC Metro* magazine, 2009

CORE PRACTICES

Business Licensing & Franchising

Housing, Economic Development and Real Estate

Education Law

Election Law

Open Government & Ethics

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)

Municipal Law

Public Infrastructure

Transportation

Water

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

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

University of California, Irvine, B.A., cum laude (Phi Beta Kappa)

Bar Admissions

California

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Professional & Community Involvement

- West End Legal Aid Clinic (volunteer legal services)

Thought Leadership

Publications

- “The Role of City Attorneys: BB&K Municipal Law Attorneys Discuss on the Air” *BBKnowledge*, March 20, 2015

Presentations

- "City Hall 2050: Will Artificial Intelligence Be the Next City Manager?" League of California Cities City Managers Conference, Feb. 12, 2026
- "Aligning Goal Setting and the Performance Evaluation Process: Best Practices to Retain Top Executive Talent," League of California Cities, City Leaders Summit, April 24, 2025
- "The Imperative for Ethical Leadership Among Latino Policymakers," National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Annual Conference, June 18, 2024
- "I'm Not in Charge? How to Get Things Done!," League of California Cities Annual Conference and Expo, Sept. 8, 2022
- "Do You Speak My Language? Language Inclusivity and Belonging in my Community," League of California Cities City Clerks New Law and Elections Seminar, Dec. 8, 2021
- "Government Lawyers," University of California Irvine School of Law, Jan. 23, 2020
- "Me Too - Time's Up," City of Riverside Executive Team, Jan. 22, 2020
- "The Shifting Sands of Economic Development: Welcome to the “O”-Zone," City Managers Conference, League of California Cities, Feb. 14, 2019
- Biennial National Institute for Newly Elected Officials, National Association of Latino Elected Officials, Nov. 17, 2018
- "Fiscal Emergencies, AB506 and Mediation," BBK Avoiding Municipal Bankruptcy Series, Nov. 13, 2018
- "Running for Office As a Woman Lawyer," Orange County Women Lawyers Association General MCLE Luncheon, March 9, 2018
- "Cannabis Economics and Regulations," Annual Regional Mayor's Summit, April 5, 2017