

OF COUNSEL

Derra Leigh Purnell

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📍 Houston / Washington, D.C.



Best Best & Krieger LLP Of Counsel Derra Leigh Purnell provides municipal clients with litigation support and overarching legal counsel. She is particularly well-versed in ICC code compliance, public-private partnership agreements, procurement law, small cell node regulation and land-use issues faced by local governments. In addition to acting as general counsel for municipalities and special districts, Derra has assisted many municipal clients with comprehensive updates to their land development regulations, including subdivision regulation, building/construction codes, zoning regulation and water/wastewater impact fees. Derra has also written more than 30 right-of-way management ordinances, including regulation of small cell node facility installation. She has a wealth of public service and corporate experience, which affords her a deep understanding of her clients' range of complex legal needs.

With sophisticated regulatory knowledge and first-hand public sector perspective, Derra advises on matters involving city services, operations, administration and more. Her astute legal guidance allows clients to focus on what matters most: serving their constituencies. Derra enjoys working with local governments because she gets to see interesting challenges and provide creative solutions. She appreciates the unique character of each local government and enjoys adapting to clients' individual needs.

Before joining BBK, Derra most recently served as director of Legal & Development Services for the City of La Marque, Texas. She also previously held roles as deputy fire marshal and oil and gas inspector for the City of Farmington, New Mexico. In addition to her vast public sector experience, Derra practiced law at Olson & Olson, LLP for more than five years.

Derra lives in Houston, Texas and loves to cook. She appreciates vintage buildings, clothes and jewelry.

Professional & Community Involvement

- Texas Women's Leadership Institute, Advisory Board Member
- Houston Area Municipal Attorneys group, affiliate organization of Texas City Attorneys Association, Vice President

CORE PRACTICES

Code Enforcement & Receiverships
Environmental Law & Natural Resources
Environmental Litigation
Municipal Law
Public Infrastructure
Special Districts

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

University of Houston Law Center, J.D.

Texas A&M University, College Station, B.S., psychology

Bar Admissions

Texas

- International Code Council, Member

Thought Leadership

Presentations

- “Review of Recent Changes in Uniform Guidance and HUD Regulations - Implementation, Challenges, and Best Practices,” U.S. Housing & Community Development Conference & Expo, Apr. 1, 2025
- “Housing Finance Corporations: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” Texas City Attorneys Association Summer Conference, June 12, 2024
- “Hot Topics in Land Use Law Panel Discussion,” American Planning Association Texas Chapter Conference, Oct. 21, 2022
- “Best Practices for Subdivision Ordinances,” American Planning Association Texas Chapter Conference, Oct. 20, 2022
- “Please Drink Responsibly,” Texas City Attorneys Association Annual Summer Conference, Jun. 16, 2022
- “Enticing Development: Applying Your Building Codes and Water Quality Regulations in an Effective, Developer-Friendly Manner,” International Municipal Lawyers Association's Mid-Year Seminar, WONK Breakfast, Apr. 10, 2022
- “When The Going Gets Tough: Navigating the Brown Act in Tricky Situations,” California Lawyers Association's Open Meetings and Open Records Conference, Apr. 7, 2022
- “Permit Streamlining for Affordable Housing Pursuant to SB 35,” Argent Communications Group's California Land Use Law & Policy Conference, Nov. 18, 2021
- “Development and Land Use in the Age of COVID-19,” Continuing Education of The Bar's Development and Land Use Webinar, May 26, 2020
- “7 Myths of Environmental Liability,” TCAA Summer Conference 2017, Jun. 2017
- “ICC Code Adoptions: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You,” Law Firm Annual Local Government Seminar, Jan. 2017