

ELI Insider

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Edited by Rachel Jean-Baptiste

Going for the Win-Win Lucinda (Cindy) Starrett

The intersection of how places impact people and people impact places has been a continuing focus for Cindy Starrett, global Chair of Latham & Watkin's Project Siting & Approvals Practice, and a partner in the firm's Los Angeles office. Add to that her love of philanthropy and her natural drive to seek out new challenges, it's no wonder Cindy takes a win-win approach toward all aspects of her life.

Growing up in Miami in the 1970s, Cindy was the first female from the area to serve as a page in the U.S. Congress after she entered—and won—a contest through her high school. In Washington, DC, she attended high school at the Library of Congress while working for Rep. Claude Pepper (D-Fla.). It was an amazing experience for the young teenager, particularly since it was just months after Richard Nixon's resignation. She went on to study public policy at Princeton. After graduation, Cindy worked as staff to a professor's research project on philanthropy at the University of Pennsylvania, then spent a year as a Fulbright Fellow in Nigeria. There, she studied women's roles in political parties and saw first-hand the intermingling of politics, the economy, and sociology. Cindy envisioned a career in international law and policy, coming back to the United States to attend the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

She first came to Latham & Watkins in 1984 as a summer associate in their Los Angeles office. The firm was representing the Los Angeles Olympic organizing committee, and she was eager to help out. "There were a lot of issues on city arrangements for the Olympics, and I ended up working on all of those," including issues for the different venues, providing a demonstration zone for people to exercise their first amendment rights, balancing security issues with free expression, and supporting the transportation program to encourage people to use public transit. Her experience with the Olympics made her realize that "the policy issues on the local level were just as interesting as the policy issues on the

international level." And so after her judicial clerkship with Dorothy Nelson on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upon graduating from law school, she came back to Latham & Watkins and has been working there ever since.

When Cindy began her career in the mid-1980s, "many of the environmental laws passed at national level at that time—the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act—had state counterparts in California, which always wanted to be progressive and ahead of the game." As laws and regulations multiplied and grew more complex, so did the opportunities for environmental lawyers, and her practice really "grew up with the profession." At Latham, Cindy soon became chair of the firm's Land Use practice.

One of Cindy's most important early client experiences was with Pepperdine University—still her client today—located in California's coastal zone on the edge of the mountains. "Of the hundreds of acres at Pepperdine, the University chose to make a strong commitment to protecting higher areas through restrictions similar to species protection and habitat protection plans, concentrating the rest of the campus development in a smaller area." She also helped develop

the firm's master plan experiences with entertainment venues, helping NBC with its planning in Burbank as well as working on the firm's long-term relationship with Universal Studios. "We still represent Universal to this day, and have been working with them for 25 years including the recent opening in LA of the hugely successful Harry Potter World."

Cindy is grateful for having worked on such "wonderful large master plans that involved very innovative issues around transportation, water, sustainability, air quality," and so on. "There are so many ways to find win-win solutions. All of the companies that I have been lucky enough to work with value sustainability, and they have been very innovative." She admits it can be quite challenging coming up with ways to assure governments that sustainability goals will actually be achieved.

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Cindy and her husband, Allan Bates, celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary with a balloon ride over Napa.

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“But when you encourage people to meet clearly established goals, you are going to have a much better end result.”

Cindy continues to look for ways to conserve resources via win-win scenarios in her private life, and is an active member on several boards, including ELI, Sustainable Conservation, and the Los Angeles Park Foundation, for which she is Chair. “What I try to do with board memberships is pursue the things that I think are really important from a pro-bono and nonprofit perspective in addition to whatever I can do in my regular practice.” Conservation easements are one of her favorite tools, and she worked with the Hearst Corporation on its conservation project for the Hearst Ranch in central California. “Conservation easements are a great way to have the private sector, public sector, and public interest all in a complete win-win situation.”

Cindy is also very involved in sports and committed to the outdoors. During her Fulbright in Nigeria, she swam competitively for the University of Nigeria at the West African university games, which was like “the Olympics for West Africa.” She was thrilled to have won some medals. She has also run marathons and climbed Mount Rainier. And her family—a husband and two sons—are huge soccer fans. So they were thrilled when Cindy helped secure the approval of a stadium for the Los Angeles Football Club, a new MLS soccer team, this past year.

Cindy also tries to mentor younger women on how to do “all the things you want to do” when it comes to balancing work and family life. “Being able to have time and commitment and energy for family responsibilities as well as work and community and nonprofits requires a lot of energy, but giving back also recharges your life—another example of a win-win approach.”

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