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Procopio partner loves natural environment

By Eli Wolfe
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Long before Robin Madaffer became a lawyer, she was drawn to the land. As a fifth-generation Arizonian, she loved the natural environment. But she was also fascinated by the people — developers, activists, architects, financiers and engineers — who transformed it.

When she became an attorney, there was no question about what she would focus on.

“Land use is a perfect mix of law and policy and community,” Madaffer said in a recent interview.

In her capacity as the partner who heads land use practice at Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP, Madaffer divides her time between the office and traveling around San Diego County visiting project sites and consulting experts.

It’s largely the same work she was doing before she joined the firm this summer, when she was running a small practice called San Diego Land Lawyers Inc., which she had founded in 2012.

“All of my clients came with me,” Madaffer said. “So I am still working on the same projects that I was working on before.”

Among Madaffer’s oldest clients is Westfield Corp., one of the world’s largest retail mall owners, which she has assisted as it renovates the UTC Mall in La Jolla. In 2012, she helped secure approval for the master plan for Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla, which is now in its second phase of development.

Since joining the firm in July, Madaffer has offered counsel to Procopio’s existing clients who are dealing with code enforcement, due diligence, and other land use issues.

Madaffer, who has worked with San Diego real estate for 15 years, said San Diego County is still struggling to find a balance in terms of regulating short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb. She also noted that real estate development is still recovering from the recession, but she has noticed an uptick in recent years as developers become more confident in the region’s potential for growth.

“No matter how difficult and long it might take to develop in San Diego, it’s still a place people want to be,” Madaffer said.

Madaffer, who graduated from the California Western School of Law in 2000, started her career as a banker at the Security Pacific Bank in Las Vegas. At the height of the city’s housing boom, one of Madaffer’s clients hired her away to manage their engineering and surveying business.



Courtesy Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch LLP

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Her interest in real estate eventually led her to take a paralegal class, which prompted her to switch careers for a third time by enrolling in law school in San Diego and later opening her own firm.

If joining Procopio was the highlight of 2016, the highlight of 2015 was when she and her husband, Jim Madaffer, a former San Diego city council member who now runs a consulting firm, saved the life of a man whom they saw lying on the sidewalk.

According to Madaffer, the man wasn’t breathing and had started to turn blue in the face. Fortunately, Jim Madaffer carried an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in the back of their car. Following the instruction, he delivered a shock that helped the man recover.

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