HUSCH BLACKWELL



Ryan Sugden

PARTNER

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OVERVIEW

Ryan represents clients in disputes across the full lifecycle of real estate development—from raw land development to completed projects in operation. He is a trial lawyer focused on complex commercial litigation involving real estate, construction, and energy projects.

Commercial landlords, developers, and contractors turn to him for advocacy in real estate and construction disputes. He also represents renewable energy developers and power suppliers navigating litigation arising from the nation's transition to a renewable energy infrastructure. His experience spans entitlements and permitting disputes, construction defect and delay claims, landlord-tenant and municipal matters, condemnation actions, and energy disputes involving construction defects, operational failures, and project delays. Before joining Husch Blackwell, Ryan spent 13 years at an Am Law 200 firm, where he handled high-stakes matters across these sectors and co-chaired the real estate litigation practice.

Ryan builds litigation strategies around clients' business objectives and relentlessly pursues them. His record includes multimillion-dollar jury verdicts, victories in dispositive motions, and complex negotiated settlements. By pairing courtroom skill with business judgment, he helps clients evaluate risk, protect value, and position matters for the strongest possible outcome.

Industry

Real Estate, Development, & Construction

Services

Appellate
Commercial Litigation
Construction Litigation
Land Use
Litigation & Alternative Dispute Resolution
Public Law

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Drawing from early experience in government and press relations, Ryan approaches litigation strategically—thinking several steps ahead and anticipating opposing arguments. In his real estate and construction work, public and private interests converge, demanding a careful balance between regulatory oversight and economic feasibility. He values the tangible impact of these developments and takes particular satisfaction in seeing the projects he advises become part of the communities where he lives and practices.

Clients rely on Ryan as a trusted advisor who builds long-standing relationships grounded in accessibility, responsiveness, and a deep understanding of their businesses. He takes ownership of matters—charting the path forward and identifying next steps. Trained in legal project management, he uses matter budgeting and creative alternative fee arrangements to improve predictability in legal spend and keep clients' broader strategic priorities front and center. Ryan provides holistic support by drawing on deep resources and collaborating across practices within the firm's national footprint to address any related needs.

Experience

ENERGY LITIGATION

- Following a three-week jury trial, won a $26.45 million judgment against the operator of a supercritical coal-fired power plant for imprudent and negligent operations.
- Successfully litigated a multimillion-dollar construction contract dispute concerning pollution control equipment installed at a coal-fired power plant. Client prevailed at summary judgment.
- Defended the owner of a newly constructed 50-megawatt combined-cycle power generating facility in litigation concerning construction defect and delay claims, mechanic's liens and subcontractor overpayments.
- On behalf of a multinational oil and gas company, prevailed at a two-day bench trial on a motion to pierce the corporate veil of a subsidiary entity to reach the assets of the parent corporation.

REAL ESTATE AND LAND USE LITIGATION

COMMERCIAL LEASING

- Experienced in all facets of commercial leasing disputes.

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Experience

- Represents the publicly traded owner of 450 shopping centers across the country in leasing litigation, land use disputes, and evictions in multiple states. Has brought in lucrative settlements and other revenue for the client.
- Won summary judgment for a commercial landlord, securing a $1.1 million judgment against the tenant after defeating the tenant's claim that COVID-19 excused its obligation to pay rent.
- Representing a commercial tenant at a three-day trial, defeated a landlord's forcible entry and detainer claim and helped the client avoid eviction and a costly disruption to its business. Client received all of its attorneys' fees as well.

LAND USE

- Represents landowners and developers in the full range of land use matters, from appearing before city councils and other boards to get projects approved or to contest permit denials to negotiating easements with neighboring property owners.
- On behalf of a real estate developer, obtained planning approval for a multimillion-dollar educational development in Colorado after appearing at a contested hearing.
- Negotiated access and drainage easements and other land use agreements between private landowners, and between landowners and government entities.
- Represented a landowner in a dispute with its homeowners association (HOA) concerning rules prohibiting installation of solar panels in a residential community.
- Represented the owner of a hotel opposing municipal use and occupancy restrictions, and utilized political and public communications consultants as part of his defense strategy.

FLOODPLAINS

- Understands the complex regulations that govern how landowners can use and develop land in designated floodplains.

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Experience

- Represented a landowner in a multi-year lawsuit against a municipality to challenge the city's wrongful enforcement of floodplain regulations. The landowner received more than $1 million in a settlement and was allowed to use its property in a more valuable way.
- Advised multiple commercial landowners seeking to develop land newly subject to floodplain regulations. Analyzed changes to Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), assisted landowners with applications for floodplain development permits, Conditional Letters of Map Revision (CLOMR), and appeals before regulatory bodies.

TAKINGS

- Represented landowners in claims against local governments in inverse condemnation, takings, and traditional condemnation claims. Published numerous articles on state and federal takings law.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

- Represented dozens of private businesses accused of violating the ADA for having inaccessible brick-and-mortar businesses and websites.

CONSTRUCTION LITIGATION

- Represents owners and contractors in construction defect, delay, and mechanic's lien disputes.
- Pursued claims against a civil engineer responsible for an inadequate drainage design for a multi-family development, resulting in a policy limit settlement for the project owner.
- Represented a commercial solar panel installer in design defect claims against a structural engineer that resulted in a monetary settlement after discovery had closed.
- Represents a general contractor in claims against the owner of a luxury residential development in delay, design defect, and interference claims.

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Experience

- Defended the owner of a commercial development at a six-day trial against a contractor whose work was defective and months late. Defeated the contractor's claim that the contract's liquidated damages provision was invalid, which helped offset the contractor's claims for unpaid fees.
- Defended a general contractor in a multi-party lawsuit concerning the design and construction of a wastewater treatment facility. The client resolved its claims after negotiating concessions from subcontractors.

GOVERNMENT (§ 1983) LITIGATION

- Represented numerous private businesses, developers, and landowners in lawsuits against government entities for claims alleging the government denied the clients their rights to due process and equal protection. Pursued these claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for a local government's interference in the sale of property, wrongful enforcement of floodplain regulations, and breach of contract for the construction of an educational facility.

GENERAL BUSINESS, INSURANCE, AND APPELLATE LITIGATION

- Represents private businesses in claims for breach of contract and general business disputes.
- Arguing before the Colorado Court of Appeals, pursued claims of first impression in a business shareholder dispute.
- Vigorously defended a workers' compensation insurer in a dispute concerning premium calculation and the application of discretionary schedule ratings. The client, the defendant, settled the case without paying any compensation to the plaintiff.

Recognition

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America*
    - Commercial Litigation, Litigation – Real Estate, 2021-2025

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Education

- J.D., Washington University in St. Louis School of Law
  - *magna cum laude*
- B.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison

Admissions

- Colorado
- Minnesota
- U.S. District Court, District of Colorado
- U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit

Community Leadership

- Impact Denver, Class of Fall 2022

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