



Michael Johnston

Director of
Forward Planning

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Can you tell us a bit about your background?

With over a decade of professional experience, I began my career in the public sector working for cities, primarily in City Manager's Offices. I later transitioned to the private sector consulting for landowners, builders and developers helping them navigate complex government agencies and entitlement processes.



What excites you most about your new role as Director of Forward Planning?

I'm thrilled to work on projects that transform the built environment, creating vibrant neighborhoods and enhancing infrastructure to uplift communities. Equally, I'm passionate about leading a team of project managers, inspiring them to share my commitment to impactful, responsible development.

What do you see as the biggest opportunities or challenges in the planning and entitlement space right now?

The key opportunities and challenges in planning and entitlements center on housing production, regulatory streamlining, and environmental compliance. State legislation promoting density and faster approvals creates openings for infill development on underutilized parcels. However, local opposition over traffic and community character, along with resistance to state housing mandates, pose obstacles. CEQA remains a major challenge, highlighting the need for reforms that balance environmental and development priorities.

Continue Reading





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How do you see your public and private sector experience shaping your approach here?

My public sector experience working for cities gave me a deep understanding of regulatory frameworks, zoning policies, and the entitlement process. In the private sector, I've guided landowners and developers through these processes, honing my ability to craft strategic, efficient solutions that meet both client goals and municipal requirements. This dual perspective enables me to act as a bridge, translating complex regulations for clients while fostering productive dialogue with agencies. My approach focuses on streamlining entitlements, preempting challenges, and delivering commercially viable outcomes that align with both client and community goals.

What value do you hope to bring to CREDE's projects and partners?

I aim to drive CREDE's project and partner success by leveraging my public-private expertise to minimize delays, mitigate risk, and unlock innovative, community-aligned development.

Outside of work, how do you like to spend your time?

My main passion right now outside of work is coaching my son in sports, which includes Little League baseball, basketball, and flag football. I also serve on the Board of the South Mission Viejo Little League.

If you'd like to learn more about CREDE's Forward Planning services, feel free to reach out to Michael Johnston directly, as he's always happy to connect and answer any questions.

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