

ICSC GOVERNMENT RELATIONS CHAIR SPOTLIGHT



Rob Cord

Rob Cord serves as the GR Chair for Northern California and has been an ICSC member for more than 20 years.

What motivated you to get involved in government relations?

As a young real estate professional, I faced challenges with local and state regulations that negatively impacted the operations of the properties I managed. I also had to address numerous ADA drive-by lawsuits at our retail centers. Both situations led me to seek assistance in order to drive change. I soon realized that we all have a voice—we just need to speak up and ask to be heard. Ultimately, I helped draft revisions to California's Title 24 regulations on lighting, and I worked with a team that ended ADA drive-by lawsuits in California. We also developed the CASp (Certified Access Specialist) program alongside professionals and lawyers, all to the benefit of property owners across the state.

What is your favorite hidden gem in California that most people don't know about?

I hesitate to share this because we used to love going to the floating campsites at Lake Oroville—until an article about them was published in the local newspaper. Since then, the campsites have been so busy that it's hard to book a reservation. However, there is another special place I'm willing to reveal. While vacationing in Bermuda, we enjoyed the golden sand and warm turquoise water. After we returned, my in-laws invited us on a boat trip and suggested we meet them at Bullard's Bar, a reservoir in Northern California. To our surprise, we found a warm lake with turquoise water and golden beaches, just an hour and a half from home. It's perfect for boat-in camping, skiing, wake surfing and wakeboarding. The dam draws water from the bottom, making the surface warm, and the golden sand gives the water a stunning turquoise hue—like having Bermuda right in our backyard.

Which ICSC meeting is your favorite to attend?

I enjoy all the meetings for the variety of each experience. I feel this is one of ICSC's greatest strengths. From ICSC LAS VEGAS to the regional and local market events, the breadth and depth of conversation, relationship building and insights each provide is truly invaluable.

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What's the best book you've read recently?

I picked up Atlas Shrugged, all 1,168 pages. Though I read it in my teens, I have a different perspective of it now as an adult. I found it interesting with the parallels in social and economic issues, some of which we are experiencing today.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Make it fun and don't take yourself too seriously. One of my first internships was in Landscape Architecture. I started as an intern and quickly moved up to working on large commercial projects across the West. The principals were older than I was (at the time, I thought they were really old, but now I realize they were only 4 and 9 years older than me, respectively). Some aspects of the work were intricate, detailed and tedious. The motto in the office was "Make It Fun!" The work had to be done, so we found ways to enjoy it along the way—like so many things in life. If you approach tasks with the attitude that they'll be enjoyable, they often get done faster.

Along with that, especially for younger professionals, it's okay not to take yourself too seriously. Welcoming criticism is essential for growth. Self-deprecation can be a great way to break the ice and ease tensions. It's not a sign of weakness or insecurity—it's actually a statement of confidence. Be comfortable being human; no one is perfect. So, have fun in what you do, and don't take yourself too seriously. Everyone around you will enjoy that, and you will too.