Litigation Due Diligence Analysis

Bedford Parc HOA v. Priestley

25STCV13277

By

JG

October 10, 2024

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# SUMMARY

Darryl and Phyllis Priestley co-own the real property located at 3750 Santa Rosalia Unit 401, Los Angeles, CA, 90008 (the “Property”). In July of 2015, Darryl (father) and Phyllis (daughter) purchased the Property and installed hardwood flooring. The HOA president at the time, James Crayton, saw the flooring get installed. Now, the owner of Unit 301 has repeatedly complained about noise from the Property, and the Association has sought enforcement related to the hardwood flooring and its compliance with the Architectural Guidelines. The Association also seeks to enforce restrictions on smoking against Client, as other members have alleged that someone at the Property is smoking from the balcony. Conversely, the HOA fails to address noise and smoking complaints from Client. Client has complained of noise from Unit 501 and the Association has not taken similar corrective action that its demanded from Client. Additionally, Client has complained of marijuana odors from the common area lobby, and of the HOA President’s boyfriend smoking 100ft away from the common area pool. Phyllis Priestley has also been the target of harassment from the upstairs neighbor and believes that the upstairs neighbor was prepared to threaten her with a firearm. Consequently, Client feels harassed and targeted.

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# PARTIES/SIGNIFICANT FIGURES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Party / Significant Figure** | **Significance to Underlying Matter/Dispute** |
| Darryl and Phyllis Priestley (“Client”)  DELETE THIS NOTE: If we represent more than one individual/entity, then list all our Clients here—one on each line. Then, make sure to alter the defined “Client” to say: **“(collectively, ‘Client’”)**. The point is to keep “Client” *singular* no matter how many people/entities we represent. If there’s a need to refer to different Clients in the “Statement of Facts/Evidentiary Support” section below, you can put a shortcut (“\*\*\*”) after each individual Client, but still collectively define all of them as “Client.” | N/A |
| Santa Rosalia 71, Inc. dba Bedford Parc Homeowners Association | HOA |

The table above may be amended from time to time to reflect revisions to Client’s narrative and/or new information that may become available in the future.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# STATEMENT OF FACTS / EVIDENTIARY SUPPORT

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date / NA** | **Fact** | **Evidence Supporting That Fact** |
| \* | This section should contain a comprehensive and objective statement of the relevant facts of the case, as well as any relevant dates. When possible, cite to evidence already in our possession that support the facts referenced. | \* |
| 4/19/19 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA.  Client closed escrow on the property. | Client Timeline |
| 6/10/19 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA.  Client notified HOA of sprinkler leak into Client’s unit. | Email from Client to Mgmt. Co. |
| N/A | REMEMBER TO DELETE ANY EXCESS ROWS IN THE TABLE BY DRAGGING YOUR MOUSE OVER THE ROWS TO BE DELETED AND THEN PRESSING **BACKSPACE** and then pressing **DELETE ENTIRE ROW**. | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* | \*\* |

This table may be amended from time to time as new information/evidence comes in. To the extent that such new information necessitates any significant revisions to Client’s litigation strategy, where applicable, the Firm will work with Client to develop a new strategy.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# NOTABLE PROVISIONS OF THE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Document Name**  **Article / Section No.** | **Text of the Selected Article/Sections No.**  **(if none, put “N/A”; delete rows that you didn’t use; maintain formatting)** |
| CC&Rs  Article IX, Section 6.01 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA. |
| Purchase Agreement  Section 8.4 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA. |
| N/A | REMEMBER TO DELETE ANY EXCESS ROWS IN THE TABLE. IF YOU DON’T KNOW HOW TO DO THAT, ASK MBK. |
| \* |  |
| \* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* |
| \* | \*\* |

The table may or may not contain all the significant provisions of the document(s) at issue. It is simply a place to include one or more provisions of one or more operative agreement/document that we believe could play a role in some aspect of Client’s case (e.g., binding arbitration, attorneys’ fees, and choice of law provisions). The provisions contained in the table, therefore, should neither be viewed as an exhaustive list of key provisions/evidence, nor be used as a measure of what provisions of the operative documents might strengthen (or weaken) Client’s case.

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# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/CLARIFICATION NEEDED FROM CLIENT

The Firm should follow up with Client regarding the following items/issues:

— TBD

This section of the LADD may be amended from time to time as new information becomes known.

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# CIVIL CODE § 5200 DOCUMENT DEMAND

The HOA produced some documents in response to a Civil Code section 5200 demand. The Firm will complete its review of those documents to determine whether any that should’ve been included are in fact missing.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS NEEDED FROM CLIENT

The Firm needs to ask Client for the following documents:

— TBD

This section of the LADD may be amended from time to time if Client locates additional documents, or if a third party produces additional documents.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# THIRD-PARTY DOCUMENTS/INFORMATION KNOWN TO EXIST

Client believes that one or more third parties has possession, custody, control, and/or knowledge of the following documents/information.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Document/Information** | **Significance of the Document/Information** | **Identity of Third Party** |
| Minutes from the executive session dated 3/5/20 re Client’s disciplinary hearing. | These minutes, which are not available to non-directors outside the context of litigation, will show that the Board acted arbitrarily and capriciously in disciplining Client. | PMC Management |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |

The table above may be amended from time to time as new information comes to light.

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# POTENTIAL CROSS-CLAIMS & THE STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES OF EACH

## Breach of CC&Rs / Breach of Equitable Servitudes / Violation of Civ. Code, § 5975

Elements—Breach of CC&Rs

— Restrictive covenants and recorded declarations are written agreements governed by contract principles. (*Pinnacle Museum Tower Assn. v. Pinnacle Market Development (US) LLC* (2012) 55 Cal.4th 223, 240.) Restrictive covenants and recorded declarations are of a contractual nature and are enforceable by statute unless unreasonable. (*Id. at* 237; and see Civ. Code, § 5975.) Because the Declaration of CC&Rs is a recorded declaration of restrictive covenants, it is enforceable provided it is not unreasonable. “[S]ettled principles of condominium law establish that an owners association, like its constituent members, must act in conformity with the terms of a recorded declaration. (See Civ. Code, § 5975, subd. (a); *Lamden v. La Jolla Shores Clubdominium Homeowners Assn.* (1999) 21 Cal.4th 249, 268 [homeowner can sue association to compel enforcement of declaration's provisions];(Citations.)” (*Pinnacle Museum Tower Assn. v. Pinnacle Market Development (US) LLC*, supra, 55 Cal.4th at p. 239.)

— Where enforcement is an issue in a breach of CC&R cause of action, it tends to arise in two ways: (i) HOA not enforcing rules at all; or (ii) HOA applying different rules to different homeowners and/or issuing fines that are not supported by existing CC&Rs (i.e., selective enforcement).

• HOA Not Enforcing Rules.

→ A homeowner can sue his or her HOA to compel enforcement of the CC&Rs. (*Lamden v. La Jolla Shores Clubdominium Homeowners Assn., supra,* 21 Cal.4th at 268; *Pinnacle Museum Tower Assn. v. Pinnacle Market Development* *(US) LLC, supra,* 55 Cal.4th 223, 239.)

• Selective Enforcement.

→ In an improper enforcement situation, there a couple avenues of attack against the HOA. First is to examine the propriety of the rule itself. Use restrictions can be enforced unless they are wholly arbitrary, violate a fundamental public policy, or impose a burden on the use of affected land that far outweighs any benefit. (*Sui v. Price* (2011) 196 Cal.App.4th 933.)

→ The second avenue is to review the enforcement process used by the HOA. This enforcement must be “in good faith, not arbitrary or capricious, and by procedures which are fair and uniformly applied.” (*Liebler v. Point Loma Tennis Club* (1995) 40 Cal.App.4th 1600, 1610; *Nahrstedt v. Lakeside Village Condominium Assn.* (1994) 8 Cal.4th 361.) In other words, the HOA must enforce the CC&Rs in a uniform and fair manner, or else its enforcement will be deemed unlawful. (*Dolan-King v. Rancho Santa Fe Ass’n.* (2000) 81 Cal.App.4th 965, 975, citing former Civ. Code, § 1354; *Villas De Las Palmas Homeowners Ass’n. v. Terifaj* (2004) 33 Cal.4th 73, 84.)

→ When an HOA seeks to enforce the provisions of its CC&Rs to compel an act by one of its member owners, it is incumbent upon it to show that it has followed its own standards and procedures prior to pursuing such a remedy, that those procedures were fair and reasonable and that its substantive decision was made in good faith, and is reasonable, not arbitrary or capricious. [Citations.]” (*Ironwood Owners Assn. IX v. Solomon* (1986) 178 Cal.App.3d 766, 772.) “The criteria for testing the reasonableness of an exercise of such a power by an owners’ association are (1) whether the reason for withholding approval is rationally related to the protection, preservation or proper operation of the property and the purposes of the Association as set forth in its governing instruments and (2) whether the power was exercised in a fair and nondiscriminatory manner. [Citations.]” (*Laguna Royale Owners Assn. v. Darger* (1981) 119 Cal.App.3d 670, 683–684.)

— “A decision on a proposed change shall be made in good faith and may not be unreasonable, arbitrary, or capricious.” (Civ. Code, § 4765(a)(2).) “It is a settled rule of law that homeowners’ associations must exercise their authority to approve or disapprove an individual homeowner’s construction or improvement plans in conformity with the declaration of covenants and restrictions, and in good faith. (*Hannula v. Hacienda Homes* (1949) 34 Cal.2d 442, 447; *Branwell v. Kuhle* (1960) 183 Cal.App.2d 767, 779.) As the court in Hannula stated: ‘Each of the decisions enforcing like restrictions has held that the refusal to approve plans must be a reasonable determination made in good faith.’ (*Hannula v. Hacienda Homes*, supra, 34 Cal.2d 442, 447.) The converse should likewise be true, ... ‘[T]he power to approve plans ... must not be exercised capriciously or arbitrarily.’ (*Bramwell v. Kuhle*, supra, 183 Cal.App.2d 767, 779); [Citations]” (*Cohen v. Kite Hill Community Assn*. (1983) 142 Cal.App.3d 642.)

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— The statute of limitations to enforce a restriction, which includes CC&Rs, is five years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 336(b).) Consequently, an action for a violation of a restriction must be commenced within five years after the party enforcing the restriction discovers, or through the exercise of reasonable diligence, should have discovered, the violation. [*As used here, a “restriction” means a limitation on, or a provision affecting the use of, real property in a deed, Declaration, or other instrument in the form of a covenant, equitable servitude, condition subsequent, negative easement, or other form of restriction.*] (Civ. Code, § 784.)

Remedies—

— While typically injunctive in nature, courts may fashion remedies to enjoin an ongoing breaches. (*Ritter & Ritter Inc. Pension and Profit Plan v. The Churchill Condominium Assn.* (2008) 166 Cal.App.4th 103.) Additionally, compensatory damages are available if plaintiff incurred monetary damages. (*Cutujian v. Benedict Hills Estates Assn.* (1996) 41 Cal.App.4th 1379, 1385; Civ. Code, §§ 3281, 3300.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *breach of the CC&Rs*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip). **By the same token, however, you need to determine whether the CC&Rs actually require the HOA to enforce the CC&Rs. Some do, and some don’t.**

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Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *weaknesses*, if any, of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal. If there are none, say so—e.g., “At this time, this cause of action is supported by the facts and the law.”

## Implied Covenant of Good Faith and Fair Dealing

Elements—Breach of the Implied Covenant of Good Faith and Fair Dealing

— The elements of a claim for breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing are: (i) the existence of a contract; (ii) the plaintiff’s performance of the contract or excuse for nonperformance; (iii) the conditions required for the defendant’s performance occurred or were excused; (iv) the defendant unfairly interfered with the plaintiff’s right to receive the benefits of the contract; and (v) the plaintiff was harmed. (See *Guz v. Bechtel National, Inc.* (2000) 24 Cal.4th 317, 349-350; *Racine & Laramie, Ltd. v. Dept. of Parks & Recreation* (1992) 11 Cal.App.4th 1026, 1031-1032.)

— Every contract imposes upon each party a duty of good faith and fair dealing in its performance and its enforcement. (Rest.2d Contracts, § 205.) “The covenant of good faith finds particular application in situations where one party is invested with a discretionary power affecting the rights of another. Such power must be exercised in good faith. [Citations.]” (*Carma Developers (Cal.), Inc., v. Marathon Development California, Inc.* (1992) 2 Cal.4th 342, 372.) “All that is required for an implied covenant claim is the existence of a contractual or relationship between the parties. (*Smith v. City and County of San Francisco* (1990) 225 Cal.App.3d 38, 49.)

— The “implied covenant imposes upon each party the obligation to do everything that the contract presupposes they will do to accomplish its purpose.” (*Schoolcraft v. Ross* (1978) 81 Cal.App.3d 75; accord *Fletcher v. Western National Life Ins. Co.* (1970) 10 Cal.App.3d 376, 401.) A “breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing involves something beyond breach of the contractual duty itself.” (*Congleton v. National Union Fire Ins. Co.* (1987) 189 Cal.App.3d 51, 59.) Indeed, “breach of a specific provision of the contract is not . . . necessary’ to a claim for breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing.” (*Thrifty Payless, Inc. v. The Americana at Brand, LLC* (2013) 218 Cal.App.4th 1230, 1244.) An association’s duty of good faith extends to each member individually. (See *Cohen v. Kite Hill Community Assn.* (1983) 142 Cal.App.3d 642.) The essence of the good faith covenant is objectively reasonable conduct. (*Badie v. Bank of America* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 779.)

— The duty of a contracting party under the covenant of good faith and fair dealing is to act in a commercially reasonable manner. (*California Pines Property Owners Assn. v. Pedotti* (2012) 206 Cal.App.4th 384, 394-396; *Badie v. Bank of America* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 779.)

— While *tortious* breach of the implied covenant is generally restricted to the insurance context, it is possible to establish such a breach *outside* the insurance context if: (i) the breach is accompanied by a common law tort (e.g., fraud, conversion, etc.); (ii) the means used to breach the contract (or its implied covenant) are tortious (e.g., involving deceit or coercion); or (iii) a party intentionally breaches the contract (or implied covenant) with the intent/knowledge that such a breach will cause severe and unmitigable harm to the other party in the form of mental anguish, personal hardship, or substantial consequential damages. (*Erlich v. Menezes* (1999) 21 Cal.4th 779.)

Remedies—

— General contractual remedies are available, including compensatory (money) damages. (Civ. Code, § 3300.)

— Tort damages are generally unavailable for real estate related matters other than leases and wrongful eviction claims that are classified as torts. (*Ginsburg v. Gamson* (2012) 205 Cal.App.4th 873.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— Same as breach of contract. Four years for written contract (Code Civ. Proc., § 337), two years for oral contract (Code Civ. Proc., § 339), and six years for negotiable instrument (e.g., promissory note) (Comm. Code, § 3118).

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *breach of the implied covenant*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip).

— \*\*\*

— \*\*\*

Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *weaknesses*, if any, of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal. If there are none, say so—e.g., “At this time, this cause of action is supported by the facts and the law.”

## Breach of Other Governing Documents

Elements—Breach of Articles, Bylaws, Rules, Etc.

— Civil Code section 5975(a) makes the CC&Rs enforceable as an equitable servitude. Articles, bylaws, and rules (defined as governing document in Civ. Code, § 4150) are not in Davis-Stirling’s definition of equitable servitudes. Civil Code section 5975(b), however, authorizes enforcement of the other governing documents such as bylaws, articles, and rules by an association against a homeowner, and by a homeowner against the association (*but not by an owner against other owners*).

Remedies—

— While typically injunctive in nature, courts may fashion remedies to enjoin any ongoing breaches. (*Ritter & Ritter Inc. Pension and Profit Plan v. The Churchill Condominium Assn.* (2008) 166 Cal.App.4th 103.) Additionally, compensatory (money) damages are available if plaintiff incurred monetary damages. (*Cutujian v. Benedict Hills Estates Assn.* (1996) 41 Cal.App.4th 1379, 1385; Civ. Code, §§ 3281, 3300.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— Unrecorded governing documents (e.g., architectural guidelines, rules, etc.) fall within the same five year statute of limitations that breach of the CC&Rs does. (*Pacific Hills Homeowners Ass’n v. Prun* (2008) 160 Cal. App. 4th 1557, 1563.)

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *breach of other governing documents*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip).

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Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *weaknesses*, if any, of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal. If there are none, say so—e.g., “At this time, this cause of action is supported by the facts and the law.”

## Negligence

Elements—Negligence

— To prove a claim for negligence, plaintiff must establish: (i) duty; (ii) breach of duty; (iii) proximate cause; and (iv) damages. (*Peredia v. HR Mobile Services, Inc.* (2018) 25 Cal.App.5th 680, 687.)

— In simple terms, negligence is the commission of an unintentional a wrongful act where one fails to exercise the degree of care in a given situation that an otherwise reasonable person would exercise to prevent another from harm. (*City of Santa Barbara v. Superior Court* (2007) 41 Cal.4th 747, 753–54.)

— An HOA that fails or refuses to abide by its contractual maintenance obligations is liable to the homeowner for damages caused by such negligence. (See, e.g., *White v. Cox* (1971) 17 Cal.App.3d 824, 895.)

— The “enforcement” issue raised in the context of the “Breach of CC&Rs” cause of action above is also applicable in the context of a negligence claim.

Remedies—

— Compensatory damages are available for all harm proximately caused by a defendant’s wrongful acts. (Civ. Code, §§ 3281, 3333-3343.7.)

— Injunctive Relief is available. Courts can fashion equitable relief to remedy negligent conditions. (*Ritter & Ritter Inc. Pension and Profit Plan v. The Churchill Condominium Assn.* (2008) 166 Cal.App.4th 103.)

— Damages for emotional distress are only available in connection with bodily injury. (*Potter v. Firestone Tire & Rubber* (1993) 6 Cal.4th 965.) Such relief, when available, arises out of a claim for *negligent infliction of emotional distress*, which often involve “bystander situations”—e.g., witnessing injury to a family member. (*Burgess v. Superior Court* (1992) 2 Cal.4th 1064.) Emotional distress damages for negligence *without* injury (e.g., fear of illness such as cancer if exposed to toxic substances threatening cancer) available if defendant acted with malice, fraud, or oppression, and the fear is based on knowledge corroborated by reliable medical or scientific evidence. (*Potter v. Firestone Tire & Rubber, supra*, 6 Cal.4th at pp. 999-1000.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— Two years for personal injuries. (Code Civ. Proc., § 335.1.)

— Three years for claims related to injury to property. (Code Civ. Proc., § 335.1.)

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *negligence*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip).

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Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

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## Breach of Fiduciary Duty

Elements—Breach of Fiduciary Duty

— The elements of a claim for breach of fiduciary duty are: (i) the existence of a fiduciary relationship; (ii) its breach; and (iii) damage proximately caused by that breach. (*Tribeca Companies, LLC v. First American Title, Ins.* (2015) 239 Cal.App.4th 1088.)

— Associations owe a fiduciary duty to their members. (*Raven’s Cove Townhomes, Inc. v. Knuppe Development Co.* (1981) 114 Cal.App.3d 783; *Cohen v. Kite Hill Community Assn.* (1983) 142 Cal.App.3d 642.)

— Directors of an association are fiduciaries and are thus required to exercise due care and undivided loyalty for the interests of the association. (*Francis T. v. Village Green Owners Assn.* (1986) 42 Cal.3d 490, 513; *Mueller v. Macban* (1976) 62 Cal.App.3d 258, 274.)

— HOAs have an affirmative duty to enforce the restrictions in their governing documents. (*Ekstrom v. Marquesa at Monarch Beach Homeowners Assn.* (2008) 168 Cal.App.4th 1111.)

— Among its acts, directors may not make decisions for the association that benefit their own interests at the expense of the association and the entire membership. (*Raven’s Cove Townhomes, Inc. v. Kruppe Development Co.* (1981) 114 Cal.App.3d 783, 799.) This is typically referred to as “self-dealing.”

— The “enforcement” issues discussed in the context of the “Breach of CC&Rs” and “Negligence” causes of action above are also applicable to a breach of fiduciary duty claim.

— The standards by which an HOA must review a homeowner’s architectural plans discussed in the context of the “Breach of CC&Rs” cause of action above is also applicable in the context of a breach of fiduciary duty claim.

Remedies—

— If the breach of fiduciary duty results in a breach of CC&Rs, then compensatory (money) damages and injunctive relief may be available.

— If the breach results in damage to property, available compensatory damages are the cost to remedy defects and for loss of use during the period of injury. (*Raven’s Cove Townhomes Inc. v. Knuppe Development Co.* (1981) 114 Cal.App.3d 783, 802.)

— Civil Code § 3333: “For the breach of an obligation not arising from contract, the measure of damages, except where otherwise expressly provided by this Code, is the amount which will compensate for all the detriment proximately caused thereby, whether it could have been anticipated or not.”

— Equitable remedies such as constructive trust, rescission, and restitution are available when the defendant has been unjustly enriched by the breach. (*Miester v. Mensinger* (2014) 230 Cal.App.4th 381.)

— Punitive damages may be available if the breach constitutes constructive fraud. (Civ. Code., § 3294; *Hobbs v. Bateman Eichler, Hill Richards Inc.* (1985) 164 Cal.App.3d 174.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— A claim for breaching a fiduciary duty must be brought within four years of the breach. (Code Civ. Proc., § 343; *William L. Lyon & Assoc, Inc. v. Sup. Ct.* (2012) 204 Cal.App.4th 1294, 1312.) If the breach of fiduciary duty stems from the defendant’s fraud (even if pleaded as breach of fiduciary duty), which has a statute of limitations of only three years, the claim must be brought within *three* years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338; *Professional Collection Consultants v. Lujan* (2018) 23 Cal.App.5th 685, 691.)

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *breach of fiduciary duty*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip).

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Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

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## Nuisance

Elements—Nuisance

— The elements for a private nuisance claim are: (i) plaintiff’s interest in property; (ii) defendant’s creation of the nuisance; (iii) unreasonable interference with plaintiff’s use or enjoyment of property; (iv) causation; and (v) damages. (Civ. Code, §§ 3479, 3491; *San Diego Gas & Electric Co. v. Sup. Ct.* (1996) 13 Cal.4th 893, 937.)

— Simply put, a cause of action for private nuisance requires the plaintiff to prove that the defendant interfered with his or her use and enjoyment of the property. (*Adams v. MHC Colony Park, L.P.* (2014) 224 Cal.App.4th 601, 610; *Monks v. City of Rancho Palos Verdes* (2008) 167 Cal.App.4th 263, 302-303.)

— A person’s unreasonable, unwarrantable, or unlawful use of his or her own property in a way that interferes with the rights of others is a nuisance. (*Hutcherseon v. Alexander* (1968) 264 CA2d 126.)

— A nuisance occurs where the invasion of the property of another is intentional and unreasonable, or is unintentional but caused by negligent or reckless conduct, or is from an abnormally dangerous activity. An *intentional* nuisance requires proof of malice or actual knowledge that harm was substantially certain to follow from the activity. The conduct is not a nuisance if it is intentional but reasonable, or is accidental and not within one of the above definitions of a nuisance. Where negligence and nuisance causes of action rely on the same facts dealing with lack of due care, the nuisance claim is a negligence claim.

— If the interference is substantial *and* unreasonable (so much so that it would be offensive or inconvenient to the “normal” person), then almost any disturbance of the enjoyment of someone’s property could constitute a nuisance. (*Monks v. City of Rancho Palos Verdes* (2008) 167 Cal.App.4th 263, 302-303 citing *Koll-Irvine Center Property Owners Assn v. County of Orange* (1994) 24 Cal.App.4th 1036, 1041 [“an interference need not directly damage the land or prevent its use to constitute a nuisance; private plaintiffs have successfully maintained nuisance actions against airports for interferences caused by noise, smoke and vibrations from flights over their homes ... and against a sewage treatment plant for interference caused by noxious odors....”].)

— Nuisances are characterized as either permanent or continuing. The nature of the claim and available damages are different for either type of nuisance. The crucial distinction between a permanent and continuing nuisance is whether the nuisance is abatable—i.e., capable of being remedied at reasonable cost and by reasonable means. (See *Mangini v. Aerojet-General Corp.* (1996) 12 Cal.4th 1087, 1093; *McCoy v. Gustafson* (2009) 180 Cal.App.4th 56, 84.)

— TBD of the CC&Rs specifically states that a violation of the CC&Rs gives rise to a separate nuisance claim.

— Nuisance v. Trespass. Nuisance is based on a property’s owner’s use of his or her own property in a way that adversely affects other property owners. Typical examples of a nuisance include things like excessive noise, vibration, odors, etc. Trespass refers to a physical invasion of property, either by persons entering the property, or a substance that is dumped, has drained onto, or under the property (e.g., drainage, toxic spills, etc.), or the encroachment of a physical object, such as a structure built over a property line.

Remedies—

— Remedies are different, depending upon whether the nuisance is *permanent* or *continuing*.

• For *permanent* nuisances, compensatory (money) damages are available. The usual measure of such damages is the diminution in fair market value of the affected property. (*Varjabedian v. City of Madera* (1977) 20 Cal.3d 285, 292 [jury decides fair market value before and after creation of nuisance].) A plaintiff may also recover the present value of losses or expenses he or she may, with reasonable certainty, incur in the future because of the nuisance. (*Id. at* 295.) A plaintiff must recover all past, present, and future damages in one suit. (*Kornoff v. Kingsburg Cotton Oil Co.* (1955) 45 Cal.2d 265, 271-272.)

• For *continuing* nuisances, the compensatory (money) damages are different. A plaintiff can only recover actual damages *through the date of the suit* (i.e., plaintiff cannot recover damages for diminution in value) because there is no certainty the nuisance will continue. The rational for that is apparently that if the defendant is willing and able to abate the nuisance, it is unfair to award damages on the theory that the nuisance will continue. (*Gehr v. Baker Hughes Oil Field Operations Inc.* (2008) 165 Cal.App.4th 660, 668.) Which leads to the most common remedy for ongoing nuisances—abatement. A continuing nuisance is ongoing and can be abated at any time via injunction. (*Baker v. Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Auth.* (1985) 39 Cal.3d 862, 868-871.)

— Emotional distress damages are also a possibility. (See *Kornoff v. Kingsburg Cotton Oil Co.*, *supra*, 45 Cal.2d at 272; *Potter v. Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.* (1993) 6 Cal.4th 965, 986, fn.10; *Smith v. County of Los Angeles* (1989) 214 Cal.App.3d 266, 287-288; *City of San Jose v. Superior Court* (1974) 12 Cal.3d 447, 464 [damages recoverable in a successful nuisance action for injuries to real property include not only diminution in market value but also damages for annoyance, inconvenience, and discomfort].) Mental distress is an element of loss of enjoyment. (*Sturges v. Charles L. Harney Inc.* (1958) 165 Cal.App.2d 306, 323.)

— Punitive damages may be awarded where plaintiff proves by clear and convincing evidence that defendant was guilty of oppression, fraud, or malice. (Civ. Code, § 3294(a); *Hassoldt v. Patrick Media Group Inc.* (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 153, 169-170.)

— Declaratory relief may be available in nuisance cases. (Code Civ. Proc., § 1060; *Shamsian v. Atlantic Richfield Co.* (2003) 107 Cal.App.4th 967, 984.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— Three years for property damage resulting from a nuisance. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338(b); *Wilshire Westwood Assocs. v. Atlantic Richfield Co.* (1993) 20 Cal.App.4th 732, 743-745.)

— Two years for personal injuries resulting from a nuisance. (Code Civ. Proc., § 335.1.)

— Commencement of running of the statute can be an issue.

• For private *continuing* nuisances, each repetition of a continuing nuisance is considered a separate wrong that commences a new period in which to bring an action based on the new injury. (*Beck Development Co., v. Southern Pacific Transportation Co.* (1996), 44 Cal.App.4th 1160.)

• For a *permanent* nuisance (e.g., a building, fence, buried sewer, or structure located on the property of another), the three year statute of limitations begins to run *when the nuisance first occurred*.

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *Nuisance*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip).

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Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *weaknesses*, if any, of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal. If there are none, say so—e.g., “At this time, this cause of action is supported by the facts and the law.”

## Declaratory Relief

Elements—Declaratory Relief

— The essential elements of a declaratory relief cause of action are: (i) an actual controversy between the parties’ contractual or property rights; (ii) involving continuing acts/omissions or future consequences; (iii) that have sufficiently ripened to permit judicial intervention and resolution; and (iv) that have not yet blossomed into an actual cause of action. (*Osseous Technologies of America, Inc. v. DiscoveryOrtho Partners LLC* (2010) 191 Cal.App.4th 357, 366–69.)

— In an action for declaratory relief, an “actual controversy” is one that “admits of definitive and conclusive relief by judgment within the field of judicial administration, as distinguished from an advisory opinion upon a particular or hypothetical state of facts; the judgment must decree, not suggest, what the parties may or may not do.” (*Selby Realty Co. v. City of San Buenaventura* (1973) 10 Cal.3d 110.)

— Code Civ. Proc., § 1060 explicitly permits declaratory relief claims to determine the rights and duties of an HOA/homeowner.

— The “enforcement” issues discussed in the context of the “Breach of CC&Rs,” Negligence,” and “Breach of Fiduciary Duty” causes of action above are also applicable to a declaratory relief claim.

— The standards by which an HOA must review a homeowner’s architectural plans discussed in the context of the “Breach of CC&Rs” and “Breach of Fiduciary Duty” causes of action above is also applicable in the context of a claim for declaratory relief.

Remedies—

— The remedy for a declaratory relief cause of action is a judicial declaration specifying the rights and obligations of the parties. (Code Civ. Proc., § 1060.)

— As to whether attorneys’ fees are available to the prevailing party, see “Attorneys’ Fees and Costs” section below.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— The statute of limitations governing a request for declaratory relief is the one applicable to an ordinary legal or equitable action based on the same claim. (*Mangini v. Aerojet–General Corp.* (1991) 230 Cal.App.3d 1125, 1155.)

Application—Application of the Law to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by restating applicable facts from above that support the elements of a cause of action for *declaratory relief*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant, you should cite to that/those provision(s) here (no need to quote or provide a snip).

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Conclusion—Strengths/Pros and Weaknesses/Cons of this Potential Cause of Action

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by drawing a conclusion about the *strengths* of this particular cause of action given the evidence at our disposal.

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# POTENTIAL AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

Based upon the allegations made against Client thus far, and based upon the facts and evidence provided by Client and/or reflected in the documents the Firm has received and reviewed, the affirmative defenses discussed below appear to be applicable.

## Statute of Limitations

Affirmative Defense—Statute of Limitations

The applicability of a statute of limitations defense depends upon the nature of the claims alleged. Based upon the claims aimed at Client, the following seem relevant:

— The statute of limitations to **enforce a restriction**, which includes CC&Rs, is five years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 336(b).) Consequently, an action for a violation of a restriction must be commenced within five years after the party enforcing the restriction discovers, or through the exercise of reasonable diligence, should have discovered, the violation. [*As used here, a “restriction” means a limitation on, or a provision affecting the use of, real property in a deed, Declaration, or other instrument in the form of a covenant, equitable servitude, condition subsequent, negative easement, or other form of restriction.*] (Civ. Code, § 784.)

— For **breach of verbal contracts**, the statute of limitations is two years (Code Civ. Proc., § 339); for breach of most **written contracts**, the statute of limitations is four years (Code Civ. Proc., § 337)—the caveat being that the statute of limitations for breach of **negotiable instruments**, like promissory notes, is six years (Comm. Code, § 3118).

— For claims involving **breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing**, the statutes of limitations are the same as they are for breach of contract.

— **Breach of unrecorded governing documents** (e.g., architectural guidelines, rules, etc.) fall within the same five year statute of limitations that breach of the CC&Rs does. (*Pacific Hills Homeowners Ass’n v. Prun* (2008) 160 Cal. App. 4th 1557, 1563.)

— A claim for **breaching a fiduciary duty** must be brought within four years of the breach. (Code Civ. Proc., § 343; *William L. Lyon & Assoc, Inc. v. Sup. Ct.* (2012) 204 Cal.App.4th 1294, 1312.) If the breach of fiduciary duty stems from the defendant’s **fraud** (even if pleaded as breach of fiduciary duty), which has a statute of limitations of only three years, the claim must be brought within three years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338; *Professional Collection Consultants v. Lujan* (2018) 23 Cal.App.5th 685, 691.)

— For *property damage* resulting from a **nuisance**, three years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338(b); *Wilshire Westwood Assocs. v. Atlantic Richfield Co.* (1993) 20 Cal.App.4th 732, 743-745.) For *personal injuries* resulting from a nuisance, two years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 335.1.)

• For private *continuing* nuisances, each repetition of a continuing nuisance is considered a separate wrong that commences a new period in which to bring an action based on the new injury. (*Beck Development Co., v. Southern Pacific Transportation Co.* (1996), 44 Cal.App.4th 1160.)

• For a *permanent* nuisance (e.g., a building, fence, buried sewer, or structure located on the property of another), the three year statute of limitations begins to run when the nuisance first occurred.

— The statute of limitations governing a request for **declaratory relief** is the one applicable to an ordinary legal or equitable action based on the same claim. (*Mangini v. Aerojet–General Corp.* (1991) 230 Cal.App.3d 1125, 1155.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Equitable Estoppel

Affirmative Defense—Equitable Estoppel

— If a party acts or makes statements to intentionally or deliberately lead someone else to believe that a particular thing is true, and the second party acts upon that belief, the first party cannot contradict his or her prior statement or conduct. (*Moncada v. West Coast Quartz Corp.* (2013) 221 Cal.App.4th 768, 782.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Unclean Hands

Affirmative Defense—Unclean Hands

— If the plaintiff’s bad conduct or bad faith causes/is related to his or her own underlying harm, then that plaintiff is barred from obtaining equitable relief—i.e., a plaintiff cannot take advantage of his or her own wrong. (Civ. Code, § 3517; *Lynn v. Duckel* (1956) 46 Cal.2d 845, 850.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Laches

Affirmative Defense—Laches

— A plaintiff’s claim is barred under the doctrine of laches if: (i) the plaintiff delayed in bringing his or her claim; (ii) the delay was unreasonable or inexcusable; and (iii) the defendant is prejudiced because of the delay. (*In re Marriage of Parker* (2017) 14 Cal.App.5th 681, 688.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Waiver

Affirmative Defense—Waiver

— As an affirmative defense, waiver is a type of estoppel. It prevents a plaintiff from relying on a right (typically contractual) that the plaintiff would otherwise have no problem being able to enforce. Often, such a waiver exists because the plaintiff did or said something that made the defendant believe that the provision in question was no longer in effect, and defendant relied upon that action/statement. (*Wind Dancer Production Group v. Walt Disney Pictures* (2017) 10 Cal.App.5th 56, 78.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Failure to Mitigate

Affirmative Defense—Failure to Mitigate

— A plaintiff has a duty to take steps to mitigate damages and is therefore not entitled to damages that could have been avoided had the plaintiff taken those steps. (*Agam v. Gavra* (2015) 236 Cal.App.4th 91, 111.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Lack of Damages

Affirmative Defense—Lack of Damages

— Damages is a necessary element in most causes of action. Consequently, if the plaintiff hasn’t been damaged, it’s almost certain that the plaintiff cannot prevail.

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Failure to State a Claim

Affirmative Defense—Failure to State a Claim

— This affirmative defense applies if the plaintiff fails to state facts sufficient to constitute a cause of action. (Code Civ. Proc., § 430.10(e).)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## No Causation

Affirmative Defense—No Causation

— The defendant is not liable for the plaintiff’s damages if another’s conduct was the cause of the harm. (*Martinez v. Vintage Petroleum, Inc.* (1998) 68 Cal.App.4th 695, 700 [“intervening negligence cuts off liability (i.e., it becomes a superseding cause) if the intervening cause, and its results, are not reasonably foreseeable].)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Justification

Affirmative Defense—Justification

— Because of the defendant’s legally protected interest, the defendant’s appropriate conduct was justified in protecting that interest. (*Richardson v. La Rancherita* (1979) 98 Cal.App.3d 73.) How this affirmative defense is applied, however, depends upon the nature of the claims alleged. For example, in response to an invasion of privacy claim, a defendant may be justified in violating a plaintiff’s privacy interest if the reason for the invasion outweighs the plaintiff’s privacy interest. (*Lewis v. Superior Court* (2017) 3 Cal.5th 561, 573.) In an assault case, however, justification means that the defendant’s force was necessary to protect the defendant or others from wrongful injury. (Civ. Code, § 50.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Ratification

Affirmative Defense—Ratification

— The defendant is not liable for the plaintiff’s harm because the plaintiff ratified the defendant’s conduct after the conduct occurred. (Civ. Code, §§ 1588, 2307, 2310, 2311; *Cruz v. HomeBase* (2000) 83 Cal.App.4th 160, 168; *C.R. v. Tenet Healthcare Corp.* (2009) 169 Cal.App.4th 1094, 1111, [“[T]he ratification relates back to the time the tortious act occurred.”].)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

## Consent

Affirmative Defense—Consent

— The defendant is not liable for the plaintiff’s harm if the plaintiff consented to the conduct prior to the harm-producing conduct’s occurrence. (Civ. Code, §§ 3515, 3516; *Austin B. v. Escondido Union School Dist.* (2007) 149 Cal.App.4th 860, 875; *Royer v. Steinberg* (1979) 90 Cal.App.3d 490, 498.)

Application/Conclusion—Application of the Affirmative Defense to Client’s Facts

— REPLACE THIS TEXT by providing a brief (1-3 sentences) statement regarding why this affirmative defense *might* apply to the facts of this case.

This section of the LADD may be amended from time to time if new information/evidence comes to light that supports additional affirmative defenses.

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# STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

## Statute of Limitations

This section is *not* intended to address whether or not the statute of limitations has run on a particular cross-claim that might have otherwise been relevant under the facts. Those specifics can be found in reference to each of the potential cross-claims discussed above.

Rather, this section of the LADD is intended only to highlight the earliest statute of limitations relevant to one of the available above-referenced cross-claims. If, therefore, Client wants to file a cross-complaint containing the applicable the causes of action discussed above, the action must be filed on or before **TBD**.

## Applicability of Davis-Stirling Act

The Davis-Stirling Act applies to the facts of this dispute.

## Jurisdiction

### Arbitration

Since there is no binding arbitration provision in the CC&Rs, any litigation related to the dispute must take place in the superior court of Los Angeles County because that is where Client’s property is located.

### Venue

Because the issues related to the current dispute involve Client’s property, which is located in Los Angeles County, that is the appropriate venue for this case.

## Standing

Based upon the information/evidence that Client has provided thus far, it appears that the opposing party has standing to pursue each of the claims alleged against Client.

Based upon the information/evidence that Client has provided thus far, Client has standing to pursue every cross-claim described above against each of the intended defendants (excluding DOES, of course).

## Anti-SLAPP Analysis

Anti-SLAPP Overview—

— Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (“SLAPP”) are lawsuits designed to hinder or prevent parties (typically the defendant) from engaging in constitutionally protected activities (e.g., petitioning or free speech). For example, development companies have used SLAPP suits to harass environmental groups standing in the way of large development/construction projects. These companies would file lawsuits against the environmentalists for the express purpose of tying up the smaller (and not as well-funded) environmental groups’ financial resources, effectively preventing them from having their “day in court.” In response, the Legislature passed the anti-SLAPP statute, which was codified in Code of Civil Procedure section 425.16. This statute allows the defending party to file a special motion to strike (called an anti-SLAPP motion) to have the court determine whether the lawsuit can proceed or should instead be thrown out as a meritless attack on the defendant’s acts made in furtherance of his or her right “to petition or free speech under the United States Constitution or the California Constitution in connection with a public issue.” (Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(b)(1).)

— The granting of an anti-SLAPP motion can have *severe* consequences, not the least of which is the dismissal of the at-issue claim(s)—or even the entire complaint—depending on the circumstances. In addition, a defendant who prevails on an anti-SLAPP motion *must* be awarded his or her attorneys’ fees and costs, which, given the complexity of anti-SLAPP motions, is typically quite significant. (Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(c)(1).)

Anti-SLAPP Statute’s Application in HOA-Related Cases—

— SLAPP suits can, and have, arisen in lawsuits by and against HOAs and HOA members. For example, a member might file a lawsuit against a director or committee member to pressure that person to change a critical vote regarding some issue or another. To prevent that type of abuse, and to discourage members from naming individual board members as defendants in litigation, courts have determined that the protections offered under the anti-SLAPP statute apply to various issues that arise in the HOA arena. (*Colyear v. Rolling Hills Community Assn. of Rancho Palos Verdes* (2017) 9 Cal.App.5th 119, 130-36 [tree trimming dispute between adjacent homeowners that involved covenants to all lots in the community satisfied the definition of “public interest”]; *Damon v. Ocean Hills Journalism Club* (2000) 85 Cal.App.4th 468, 476-77 [newsletter published to 3,000 residents of an HOA was a “public forum” even if access to the newsletter was selective and limited]; *Ruiz v. Harbor View Community Assn.* (2005) 134 Cal.App.4th 1456; *Dowling v. Zimmerman* (2001) 85 Cal.App.4th 1400, 1409-10 [letters from attorney to management company and the HOA’s board regarding nuisance caused by an HOA member].)

— Obviously, however, not all HOA-related disputes are covered by the anti-SLAPP statute. (*Talega Maintenance Corp. v. Standard Pac. Corp.* (2014) 225 Cal.App.4th 722, 732 [holding that HOA proceedings must have a strong connection to governmental proceedings to qualify as “official proceedings”]; but see *Lee v. Silveira* (2016) 6 Cal.App.5th 527, 540-46 [holding that HOAs “functioned similar to a quasi-governmental body” to constitute a “public forum”].)

Anti-SLAPP Test—

— The courts use a two-prong test to determine if a claim is protected under the anti-SLAPP statute. First, the defendant must prove that the at-issue claim arises from a constitutionally protected activity. (*Ruiz v. Harbor View Community Assn., supra,* 134 Cal.App.4th at 1466; Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(b)(1).) If the defendant satisfies his or her burden, the burden shifts to the plaintiff to show that there is a probability that he or she will prevail on the merits of the at-issue claim. (*Ibid*.; *Equilon Enterprises v. Consumer Cause Inc.* (2002) 29 Cal.4th 53, 67; Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(b)(1).)

— With regard to the first prong, there are four categories that the anti-SLAPP statute is intended to protect:

• Any statement (written or oral) or document generated in connection with (or as part of):

→ Any official proceedings authorized by law—e.g., legislative, executive, or judicial proceedings. (Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(e)(1).)

→ Any issue under consideration or review by a legislative, executive, or judicial body. (Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(e)(2).)

• Any statement (written or oral) or document made in a place open to the public (or in a public forum) and made in connection with an issue of public interest. (Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(e)(3).)

• Any other conduct made in furtherance of the exercise of a constitutional right of petition or free speech and made in connection with an issue of public interest. (Code Civ. Proc., § 425.16(e)(4).)

Application/Analysis/Conclusion—

— Based upon the applicable facts and claims, an anti-SLAPP motion is unlikely because none of the conduct complained of arises from constitutionally protected activities.

## Pre-Filing Requirements (e.g., Notice or Mediation Requirements)

Civil Code section 5930 requires parties to attempt alternative dispute resolution prior to filing certain types of lawsuits. That provision of the Davis-Stirling Act applies in this case. *The opposition, however, did not comply with the statute prior to filing against Client.*

Not only does such a failure subject the operative complaint to demurrer, but even if Client were to waive the right to demurrer (i.e., not file a Demurrer), Client could conceivably file a motion for judgment on the pleadings.

Client could also choose to allow the case to proceed to trial where, even if the opposition were to prevail against Client, the opposition’s failure to abide by the ADR requirements could result in the Court reducing (or virtually eliminating) the attorneys’ fees to which the opposition would otherwise be entitled under Civil Code section 5930. (Civ. Code, § 5960.)

## Attorneys’ Fees and Costs

The prevailing party is entitled to attorneys’ fees and costs under the Davis-Stirling Act. The prevailing party is also entitled to their attorneys’ fees and costs under TBD of the CC&Rs.

If new information comes to light that affects Client’s right to attorneys’ fees and costs, Client will be notified.

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# FINAL THOUGHTS / ISSUES / CONCERNS / COMMENTS

TBD

This section of the LADD might be amended from time to time to reflect new information, strategies, or concerns that arise during the course of the litigation.

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