**PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS**

**Muller v. HOA and Muse**

Prepared By

SE

February 8, 2023

# SHORT SUMMARY OF CASE

Client’s dispute relates to the location of his washer and dryer unit and the neighbor’s use of the washer and dryer unit. Client has tenants residing at the unit that have been harassed by the neighbor, Donna Muse, both because of Muse’s use of the washer and dryer and her general demeanor towards them. Consequently, Client is concerned about potentially losing his tenants and therefore, rental income. Client retained the firm to address two primary issues, the harassment from Muse and the designation of the washer and dryer area.Client has potential affirmative claims for breach of the HOA’s governing documents, negligence, and nuisance.

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# Parties / Significant Figures

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| **Name of Party** | **Significance to Underlying Matter/Dispute** |
| Noel Muller (“Client”) | Client / HOA Member |
| Donna Muse ("Muse") | Neighbor  |
| 1038-1042 Pine Street Homeowners Association, Inc. (the "HOA") | HOA  |

This table may be amended from time to time as new information/evidence comes in regarding new “parties” and/or witnesses.

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# Statement of Facts / Evidentiary Support

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date / NA** | **Fact** | **Evidence Supporting That Fact** |
| 4/19/19 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA. Client closed escrow on the property. | Client Timeline |
| N/A | 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**. | \*\* |
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This table may be amended from time to time as new information/evidence comes in that require significant revisions to Client’s pre-litigation strategy.

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# Notable Provisions of the Governing Documents

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| --- | --- |
| **Document****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&RsSection 6.01 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA. The HOA shall paint, maintain, repair and make necessary improvements to the common areas, as well as the exteriors of the garage, deck, and balcony elements of the Units, in good condition and repair. |
| Operating RulesP. 20 | THIS IS AN EXAMPLE. REPLACE IT WITH ACTUAL DATA.[I]n the event of any water damage, mold infestation, or related damage arising from an owner’s negligence, or arising from any pipe leak or similar failure for which this owner has the maintenance responsibility, the owner shall be responsible for all repairs and resulting damage. |
| 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**. |
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The table may or may not contain all the significant provisions of Client’s governing documents. Its sole purpose, in fact, is to help make the Firm’s analysis of Client’s pre-litigation case more convenient. 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 governing documents might strengthen (or weaken) Client’s pre-litigation case.

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# Additional Information/Clarification Needed From Client

At this time, the Firm does not need Client to provide any additional information or clarification. This section of the Preliminary Analysis may, however, be amended from time to time as new information/questions arise.

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# Additional Documents Needed From Client

None at the moment.

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Potential Causes of Action and 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&Rs cause of action (as it is here), 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.)

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.”

## 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.)

— 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.

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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.”

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.

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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.)

— 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.

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## Trespass

Elements—Trespass.

— “A trespass is an invasion of the interest in the exclusive possession of land, as by entry upon it.” (*Wilson v. Interlake Steel Co.* (1982) 32 Cal.3d 229, 233.) “The essence of the cause of action for trespass is an ‘unauthorized entry’ onto the land of another.” (*Cassinos v. Union Oil Co.* (1993) 14 Cal.App.4th 1770, 1778) [trespass where wastewater was injected from defendant’s property to plaintiff’s, interfering with plaintiff’s mineral estate].

— An action for trespass may technically be maintained only by one whose right to possession has been violated (see generally, Prosser, Law of Torts, (4th ed.) § 13, p. 69; *Uttendorffer v. Saegers* (1875) 50 Cal. 496, 497–498); however, an out-of-possession property owner may recover for an injury to the land by a trespasser which damages the ownership interest. (*Rogers v. Duhart* (1893) 97 Cal. 500, 504–505)[citations]” (*Smith v. Cap Concrete, Inc.* (1982) 133 Cal.App.3d 769, 774.) In other words, a plaintiff asserting a claim for trespass must have a possessory interest in the land at issue; mere ownership is not sufficient. (*Dieterich Int’l Truck Sales, Inc. v. J.S. & J. Servs. Inc.* (1992) 3 Cal.App.4th 1601, 1608–10.)

— Where possession is an issue, courts have held that “whether plaintiff’s relationship to the land amounts to possession within the meaning of the foregoing principles is a question of fact to be determined by the jury (*O’Banion v. Borba* (1948) 32 Cal.2d 145; *Walner v. City of Turlock* (1964) 230 Cal.App.2d 399; *Brumagim v. Bradshaw* (1870) 39 Cal. 24), unless it can be said as a matter of law that the evidence upon that issue is palpably insufficient to support a verdict for plaintiff. (*O’Keefe v. South End Rowing Club* (1966) 64 Cal.2d 729; [Citations]” (*Williams v. Goodwin* (1974) 41 Cal.App.3d 496, 509.)

— Like nuisances, trespasses can be characterized by either permanent or continuing. The principles governing the permanent or continuing nature of a trespass or nuisance are the same, and the cases discuss the two causes of action without distinction (although the distinction has implications for the statute of limitations and remedies available). (See *Starrh & Starrh Cotton Growers v. Aera Energy LLC* (2007) 153 Cal.App.4th 583.) The key to classifying a trespass as continuing or permanent is whether it is likely to be discontinued or abated at a later date. (*Id. at* 592.)

Remedies—

— As is the case with nuisances, the remedies for *prior* trespasses and an *ongoing* trespasses are different.

• For a *prior* act of trespass, the measure of compensatory (money) damages includes the: (i) value of the property’s use during the time it was wrongfully occupied (not more than five years before filing suit); (ii) reasonable cost of repair or restoration of the property to its original condition; and (iii) costs of recovering possession. (Civ. Code, § 3334(a).) The value of a property’s use is the greater of its reasonable rental value or the benefits obtained by the person wrongfully occupying the land. (Civ. Code, § 3334(b); *Starrh & Starrh Cotton Growers v. Aera Energy LLC*, *supra*, 153 Cal.App.4th at 604.) The “reasonable” component means that a plaintiff will recover the lesser of the cost of repairing the damage and restoring the property to its original condition, or the diminution in the value of the property. (*Id.* at pp. 599-600.)

→ Damages for “annoyance and discomfort that would naturally ensue” from a trespass on a plaintiff’s land are also recoverable, and are intended to compensate plaintiff for the loss of peaceful enjoyment of the property. (*Kornoff v. Kingsburg Cotton Oil Co.* (1955) 45 Cal.2d 265, 273.) These damages are generally related to distress “arising out of physical discomfort, irritation, or inconvenience caused by odors, pests, noise, and the like.” (*Kelly v. CB & I Constructors Inc.* (2009) 179 Cal.App.4th 442, 456.)

→ A plaintiff may recover damages for emotional distress and mental anguish proximately caused by a trespass. (*Armitage v. Decker* (1990) 218 Cal.App.3d 887, 905; *Hensley v. San Diego Gas & Elec. Co.* (2017) 7 Cal.App.5th 1337, 1348-1352.) Emotional distress without physical injury is also compensable. (*Potter v. Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.* (1993) 6 Cal.4th 965, 986, fn.10.)

• With *continuing* trespasses, compensatory damages calculations are different because a plaintiff may only recover damages for *present and past injury to the property*. No award may be made for *future or prospective harm* because, as in the case of ongoing nuisances, a continuing trespass can be abated any time, ending the harm. (*Starrh & Starrh Cotton Growers v. Aera Energy LLC* (2007) 153 Cal.App.4th 583, 592.) Only the “reasonable” cost of repairing or restoring the property to its original condition is recoverable. (Civ. Code, § 3334(a); see *Mangini v. Aerojet-General Corp.* (1996) 12 Cal.4th 1087, 1103.)

— A trespass can be abated by an injunction in certain situations. In cases of encroachment, plaintiff may obtain a mandatory injunction ordering defendant to remove the encroachment. (*Posey v. Leavitt* (1991) 229 Cal.App.3d 1236, 1251[condominium owner extended deck into common area and was ordered to remove it].)

— For all forms of trespass, punitive damages may be awarded where plaintiff proves by clear and convincing evidence that defendant is guilty of oppression, fraud, or malice. (Civ. Code, § 3294(a); *Hassholdt v. Patrick Media Group Inc.* (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 153, 169.)

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

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— The limitations period for a trespass action is generally three years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338(b).) When the claim accrues depends on whether the trespass is “permanent” or “continuing.”

• For *permanent trespass*, a claim accrues when the trespass occurs. Plaintiff must bring a single action for past, present, and future damages within three years (*Starrh & Starrh Cotton Growers v. Aera Energy LLC* (2007) 153 Cal.App.4th 583, 592.)

• For *continuing trespass*, a new cause of action accrues each day the trespass continues, and a plaintiff must bring periodic successive actions if the trespass continues without abatement. (*Baker v. Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport Auth.* (1985) 39 Cal.3d 862, 869.)

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 *trespass*. 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.”

## Trespass to Chattels

Elements—Trespass to Chattels.

— To prevail on a claim for trespass to chattels, plaintiff must show (i) that plaintiff owned, possessed, or had a right to personal property; (ii) that defendant intentionally interfered with plaintiff’s use or possession of the property, (iii) that plaintiff did not consent to defendant’s interference, (iv) harm, and (v) causation. (*Intel Corp. v. Hamidi* (2003) 30 Cal.4th 1342, 1350-51.)

— The personal property at issue must be *tangible*. (*Intel Corp. v. Hamidi, supra,* 30 Cal.4th 1342 at 1357.)

— Trespass to chattels v. conversion. While both trespass to chattels and conversion are similar, there is a difference. Conversion arises from the *complete* dispossession of the *personal* *property*, while trespass to chattels deals with a lesser degree of interference. Note that neither tort is appropriate in the context of *real* *property*.

Remedies—

— Compensatory damages are available for actual damages and emotional distress resulting from the lost use or impairment of the property. (Civ. Code, § 3333; *Plotnik v. Meihaus* (2012) 208 Cal.App.4th 1590, 1605-07.) Nominal damages, however, are not available—i.e., the trespass must cause actual harm. (*Intel Corp. v. Hamidi, supra,* 30 Cal.4th at p. 1351.)

— Injunctive relief is available to prevent future harm. (*Intel Corp. v. Hamidi, supra,* 30 Cal.4th at 1352.)

— Punitive damages may be available if the plaintiff shows that the defendant acted oppressively, fraudulently, or maliciously. (Civ. Code, § 3294.)

— If the following types of property are at issue, treble (triple) damages may be awarded:

• Timber. (Code Civ. Proc., § 733.)

• Injury to Cable Television Property. (Corps. Code, § 14400.)

• Stealing utility services. (Civ. Code, § 1882.1.)

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— A claim for trespass to chattels must be brought within three years, and the statute generally begins accruing when the trespass occurs. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338(c); *AmerUS Life Ins. Co. v. Bank of America, N.A.* (2006) 143 Cal.App.4th 631, 639.)

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 *conversion*. If one or more provisions of the CC&Rs is/are relevant (e.g., nuisance), 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.”

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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.

This section of the Preliminary Analysis 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

## Applicability of Davis-Stirling Act

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

## Attorneys’ Fees and Costs

If this dispute is adjudicated, the prevailing party will be entitled to attorneys’ fees and costs under the Davis-Stirling Act. In addition, the prevailing part in any such litigation will also be entitled to their attorneys’ fees and costs under Section 8.7 of the CC&Rs.

## Jurisdiction and Venue

Since there is no binding arbitration provision in the CC&Rs, any litigation related to the dispute must take place in superior court of the county in which Client’s property is located.

## Standing

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

## Secondary Conflicts Check

No new potential or actual conflict of interest between the parties and/or significant figures came to light during the Firm’s preparation of this Preliminary Analysis.

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# Final Thoughts / Issues / Concerns / Comments

None at this time.

This section of the Preliminary Analysis 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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