Litigation Due Diligence Analysis

White v. Daily Planet LTD

By

MBK

April 3, 2023

Table of Contents

[1. SUMMARY 8](#_Toc130368692)

[2. PARTIES/SIGNIFICANT FIGURES 8](#_Toc130368693)

[3. STATEMENT OF FACTS / EVIDENTIARY SUPPORT 11](#_Toc130368694)

[4. yn\_notable\_provisions\_govdocs\_table == "Yes" NOTABLE PROVISIONS OF THE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS###yn\_notable\_provisions\_agreement\_table == "Yes" NOTABLE PROVISIONS OF ONE OR MORE OPERATIVE AGREEMENTS###yn\_notable\_provisions\_govdocs\_table == "No" or yn\_notable\_provisions\_agreement\_table == "No"RESERVED### 13](#_Toc130368695)

[5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/CLARIFICATION NEEDED FROM CLIENT 14](#_Toc130368696)

[6. CIVIL CODE § 5200 DOCUMENT DEMAND 15](#_Toc130368697)

[7. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS NEEDED FROM CLIENT 16](#_Toc130368698)

[8. THIRD-PARTY DOCUMENTS/INFORMATION KNOWN TO EXIST 17](#_Toc130368699)

[9. MUST NOT USE HOA’S PRIVILEGED DOCUMENTS 19](#_Toc130368700)

[9.1. Can Client Waive the Privilege? 19](#_Toc130368701)

[9.2. Does the CRPC Require the Firm to *Return* the Privileged Documents? 20](#_Toc130368702)

[9.3. Does Providing Privileged Documents to the Firm Constitute a Fiduciary Breach by Client? 21](#_Toc130368703)

[10. radio\_client\_plaintiff\_defendant == "Plaintiff/Petitioner" POTENTIAL CAUSES OF ACTION & THE STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES OF EACH###radio\_client\_plaintiff\_defendant == "Defendant/Respondent" and yn\_cross\_claims == "Yes" POTENTIAL CROSS-CLAIMS & THE STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES OF EACH### 21](#_Toc130368704)

[10.1. Breach of CC&Rs / Breach of Equitable Servitudes / Violation of Civ. Code, § 5975 21](#_Toc130368705)

[10.2. Breach of Contract 24](#_Toc130368706)

[10.3. Implied Covenant of Good Faith and Fair Dealing 25](#_Toc130368707)

[10.4. Breach of Other Governing Documents 27](#_Toc130368708)

[10.5. Negligence 29](#_Toc130368709)

[10.6. Breach of Fiduciary Duty 32](#_Toc130368710)

[10.7. Nuisance 35](#_Toc130368711)

[10.8. Trespass 39](#_Toc130368712)

[10.9. Interference with Prospective Business Advantage 42](#_Toc130368713)

[10.10. Interference with Contract 44](#_Toc130368714)

[10.11. Intentional Misrepresentation (Fraud) 45](#_Toc130368715)

[10.12. Negligent Misrepresentation 49](#_Toc130368716)

[10.13. Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress (“IIED”) 51](#_Toc130368717)

[10.14. Violation of Open Meeting Act 52](#_Toc130368718)

[10.15. Declaratory Relief 54](#_Toc130368719)

[10.16. Violation of Election Laws (Civ. Code, § 5100 et seq.) 58](#_Toc130368720)

[10.17. Assault 62](#_Toc130368721)

[10.18. Battery 63](#_Toc130368722)

[10.19. Defamation 65](#_Toc130368723)

[10.20. Civil Stalking 67](#_Toc130368724)

[10.21. Violation of Statute (Dog Bite) 69](#_Toc130368725)

[10.22. False Imprisonment 71](#_Toc130368726)

[10.23. Invasion of Privacy 72](#_Toc130368727)

[10.24. Express Indemnity 74](#_Toc130368728)

[10.25. Equitable Indemnity 76](#_Toc130368729)

[10.26. Failure to Permit Inspection of Records 77](#_Toc130368730)

[10.27. Quiet Title 78](#_Toc130368731)

[10.28. Slander of Title 80](#_Toc130368732)

[10.29. Cancellation of Instrument 81](#_Toc130368733)

[10.30. Reformation of Instrument 82](#_Toc130368734)

[10.31. Partition 84](#_Toc130368735)

[10.32. Conversion 85](#_Toc130368736)

[10.33. Trespass to Chattels 87](#_Toc130368737)

[10.34. Open Book Account 89](#_Toc130368738)

[10.35. Money Had and Received 90](#_Toc130368739)

[10.36. Account Stated 91](#_Toc130368740)

[10.37. Goods and Services Rendered 92](#_Toc130368741)

[10.38. Unjust Enrichment 93](#_Toc130368742)

[10.39. Rescission 94](#_Toc130368743)

[10.40. Financial Elder Abuse (Welf. & Inst. Code, § 15610.30) 95](#_Toc130368744)

[10.41. Negligent Hiring 97](#_Toc130368745)

[10.42. Negligent Supervision 99](#_Toc130368746)

[10.43. Unfair Business Practices (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 17200 et seq.) 102](#_Toc130368747)

[10.44. Receipt of Stolen Property (Penal Code § 496) 104](#_Toc130368748)

[10.45. Misrepresentation in Connection with Sale of Security (Corp. Code, § 25401) 105](#_Toc130368749)

[10.46. Recovery Against Contractor’s Bond 108](#_Toc130368750)

[10.47. Breach of Independent Wholesale Representatives Act (Civ. Code, § 1738.10 et seq) 109](#_Toc130368751)

[10.48. Violation of California Uniform Trade Secrets Act (Civ. Code, § 3426 et seq.) 113](#_Toc130368752)

[10.49. Malicious Prosecution 114](#_Toc130368753)

[10.50. Abuse of Process 117](#_Toc130368754)

[10.51. Insurance Bad Faith 120](#_Toc130368755)

[10.52. Medical Malpractice 123](#_Toc130368756)

[10.53. Legal Malpractice 126](#_Toc130368757)

[10.54. Fraudulent Transfer (Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act—Civil Code, § 3439 et seq.) 131](#_Toc130368758)

[10.55. 134](#_Toc130368759)

[10.56. 135](#_Toc130368760)

[radio\_client\_plaintiff\_defendant == "Defendant/Respondent" 136](#_Toc130368761)

[11. POTENTIAL AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES 136](#_Toc130368762)

[11.1. BJR (Lamden) 136](#_Toc130368763)

[11.2. Statute of Limitations 138](#_Toc130368764)

[11.3. Equitable Estoppel 144](#_Toc130368765)

[11.4. Unclean Hands 144](#_Toc130368766)

[11.5. Laches 144](#_Toc130368767)

[11.6. Negligence (Comparative Fault) 145](#_Toc130368768)

[11.7. Apportionment 145](#_Toc130368769)

[11.8. Negligence (Sudden Emergency) 146](#_Toc130368770)

[11.9. Assumption of Risk 146](#_Toc130368771)

[11.10. Contract (Force Majeure) 147](#_Toc130368772)

[11.11. Contract (Duress) 147](#_Toc130368773)

[11.12. Contract (Fraud) 148](#_Toc130368774)

[11.13. Contract (Frustration of Purpose) 149](#_Toc130368775)

[11.14. Contract (Lack of Consideration) 149](#_Toc130368776)

[11.15. Contract (Failure of Consideration) 150](#_Toc130368777)

[11.16. Contract (Illegality) 150](#_Toc130368778)

[11.17. Contract (Impossibility) 151](#_Toc130368779)

[11.18. Contract (Impracticability) 151](#_Toc130368780)

[11.19. Contract (Mistake of Law) 152](#_Toc130368781)

[11.20. Contract (Mistake of Fact) 152](#_Toc130368782)

[11.21. Contract (Novation) 153](#_Toc130368783)

[11.22. Contract (Statute of Frauds) 153](#_Toc130368784)

[11.23. Contract (Unconscionability) 154](#_Toc130368785)

[11.24. Contract (Undue Influence) 155](#_Toc130368786)

[11.25. Contract (Accord and Satisfaction) 155](#_Toc130368787)

[11.26. Waiver 156](#_Toc130368788)

[11.27. Failure to Mitigate 156](#_Toc130368789)

[11.28. Lack of Damages 157](#_Toc130368790)

[11.29. Failure to State a Claim 157](#_Toc130368791)

[11.30. No Causation 158](#_Toc130368792)

[11.31. Justification 158](#_Toc130368793)

[11.32. Ratification 159](#_Toc130368794)

[11.33. Litigation Privilege (Civ. Code, § 47) 159](#_Toc130368795)

[11.34. Consent 160](#_Toc130368796)

[11.35. Necessity 160](#_Toc130368797)

[11.36. Private Necessity 161](#_Toc130368798)

[11.37. Equitable Easement 161](#_Toc130368799)

[12. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS 162](#_Toc130368800)

[12.1. Statute of Limitations 162](#_Toc130368801)

[12.2. Applicability of Davis-Stirling Act 162](#_Toc130368802)

[12.3. Jurisdiction 163](#_Toc130368803)

[12.3.1. Arbitration 163](#_Toc130368804)

[12.3.2. Personal Jurisdiction 163](#_Toc130368805)

[12.3.3. Subject Matter Jurisdiction 164](#_Toc130368806)

[12.4. Standing 164](#_Toc130368807)

[12.5. Anti-SLAPP Analysis 166](#_Toc130368808)

[12.6. Pre-Filing Requirements 175](#_Toc130368809)

[12.7. Attorneys’ Fees and Costs 176](#_Toc130368810)

[13. FINAL THOUGHTS / ISSUES / CONCERNS / COMMENTS 177](#_Toc130368811)

# SUMMARY

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# PARTIES/SIGNIFICANT FIGURES

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Party / Significant Figure** | **Significance to Underlying Matter/Dispute** |
| Perry White (“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 |
| The Daily Planet LTD ("Daily Planet") | Bad Guy  |
| Grant Pooper | CEO of Daily Planet  |

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.

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# 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**. | \*\* |
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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.

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# RESERVED

RESERVED.

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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 LADD may, however, be amended from time to time as new information/questions arise.

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# ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS NEEDED FROM CLIENT

The Firm needs to ask Client for the following documents:

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— Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient. Ac feugiat sed lectus vestibulum mattis. Lacus vel facilisis volutpat est velit. Ligula ullamcorper malesuada proin libero nunc.

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.

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# 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 |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
| \* | \*\* | \* |
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The table above may be amended from time to time as new information comes to light.

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# POTENTIAL CAUSES OF ACTION &THE STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES OF EACH

## 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.)

— Trespass v. Nuisance. 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. 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.

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).

— \*\*\*

— \*\*\*

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.”

## Intentional Misrepresentation (Fraud)

Elements—Intentional Misrepresentation (and fraud)

— The elements of a cause of action for intentional misrepresentation are: (i) a misrepresentation; (ii) made with knowledge of its falsity; (iii) with the intent to induce another’s reliance on the misrepresentation; (iv) actual and justifiable reliance; and (v) resulting damage. (*Daniels v. Select Portfolio Servicing, Inc.* (2016) 246 Cal.App.4th 1150, 1166; *Chapman v. Skype Inc.* (2013) 220 Cal.App.4th 217, 230-231.)

• A false representation is the suggestion, as a fact, of something untrue by one who does not believe it to be true. (Civ. Code, § 1710(1).) In general, the statement must be of a past or present fact, not opinion, estimates or speculation. (*Neu-Visions Sports Inc. v. Soren/McAdam/Bartells* (2000) 86 Cal.App.4th 303, 308-310.)

— The elements of an action for fraud and deceit based on a concealment are: (i) the defendant must have concealed or suppressed a material fact; (ii) the defendant must have been under a duty to disclose the fact to the plaintiff; (iii) the defendant must have intentionally concealed or suppressed the fact with the intent to defraud the plaintiff; (iv) the plaintiff must have been unaware of the fact and would not have acted as he did if he had known of the concealed or suppressed fact; (v) as a result of the concealment or suppression of the fact, the plaintiff must have sustained damage. (*Marketing West Inc. v. Sanyo Fisher (USA) Corp.* (1992) 6 Cal. App.4th 603, 612-613.)

— A promise made without intending to fulfill it—i.e., “promissory fraud”—is also actionable as fraud. In this situation, the “fact” being misrepresented is the speaker’s present intention to perform. (Civ. Code, § 1710(4); *Engalla v. Permanente Med. Group Inc.* (1997) 15 Cal.4th 951, 973 [a promise to do something necessarily implies the intention to perform; hence, where a promise is made without such intention, there is an implied misrepresentation of fact that may be actionable fraud].)

— Defendant must know the statement is false or act with reckless disregard of its truth or falsity. (*Lazar v. Sup.Ct. (Rykoff- Sexton Inc.)* (1996) 12 Cal.4th 631, 638; *Bily v. Arthur Young & Co.* (1992) 3 Cal.4th 370, 415 [scienter requirement satisfied if defendant has no belief in truth of statement and makes it recklessly, without knowing whether it is true or false].)

— Civil Code section 1709—“One who willfully deceives another with intent to induce him to alter his position to his injury or risk, is liable for any damage which he thereby suffers.”

• Defendant must intend to induce the other party to act in reliance on the false information. (Civ. Code, § 1709; *City of Atascadero v. Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc.* (1998) 68 Cal.App.4th 445, 481.)

• Although Civil Code section 1709 does not list “reliance” as a required element of deceit, plaintiff must plead and prove that he or she actually and justifiably relied on defendant’s misrepresentation. (*Mirkin v. Wasserman* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 1082, 1091.)

— Civil Code section 1710—Defines deceit (as used in § 1709), and includes three different types of deceit, including a promise made without any intention of performing (see above). Actual reliance is a component of “justifiable reliance.” (*Garcia v. Superior Court* (1990) 50 Cal.3d 728, 737.) A plaintiff must have been justified in believing defendant’s statements. (*Gray v. Don Miller & Assocs. Inc.* (1984) 35 Cal.3d 498, 503.) Actual reliance is shown if the misrepresentation substantially influences plaintiff’s decision to act. (*Whiteley v. Philip Morris Inc.* (2004) 117 Cal.App.4th 635, 678.) A plaintiff who does not believe the representations made to him or her cannot establish actual reliance. (*Buckland v. Threshold Enterprises Ltd.* (2007) 155 Cal.App.4th 798, 806-808.)

— There are three considerations in determining reasonable reliance. First, the representation or promise must be material, as judged by a reasonable person standard. (*Charpentier v. Los Angeles Rams (1999) 75 Cal.App.4th 301, 312–313*.) Second, if the matter is material, reasonableness must take into account the plaintiff’s own knowledge, education, and experience; the objective reasonable person is irrelevant at this step. Third, some matters are simply too preposterous to be believed by anyone, notwithstanding limited knowledge, education, and experience. (*Blankenheim v. E. F. Hutton, Co. Inc.* (1990) 217 Cal.App.3d 1463, 1474.)

— Forbearance can constitute reliance if plaintiff decided not to do something based on the misrepresentations. (*Small v. Frist Cos. Inc.* (2003) 30 Cal.4th 167.)

— While the standard to determine the reasonableness of the reliance is subjective (i.e., the “reasonable person” standard doesn’t typically apply, and thus being gullible is often not a bar to establishing reliance)—*Brownlee v. Vang* (1965) 235 Cal.App.2d 465—there is a limit to that subjective standard. A plaintiff cannot rely on representations that are so preposterous and “so patently and obviously false that he must have closed his eyes to avoid discovery of the truth.” (*Blankenheim v. E.F. Hutton & Co. Inc.* (1990) 217 Cal.App.3d 1463, 1474.)

— Plaintiff must plead and prove that defendant’s fraud was the cause of plaintiff’s injury (*Service by Medallion Inc. v. Clorox Co.* (1996) 44 Cal.App.4th 1807, 1818) and that his or her damages were proximately caused by defendant’s tortious conduct (Civ. Code, §§ 1709, 3333, 3343; *Fladeboe v. American Isuzu Motors Inc.* (2007) 150 Cal.App.4th 42, 65-66.)

Remedies—

— Different measures of compensatory (money) damages are available depending upon the nature of the claim. In general, for compensatory damages, defrauded plaintiffs are limited to the “out-of-pocket” measure of damages, which seeks to restore plaintiffs to the financial position they were in before the fraud occurred. Plaintiffs receive the difference in value between what they gave to defendant and what they received. (*Alliance Mortgage. Co. v. Rothwell* (1995) 10 Cal.4th 1226 [damages include difference between value given and value received, plus consequential pecuniary loss caused by reliance on misrepresentation].)

— For claims involving the purchase, sale, or exchange of real property, Civil Code section 3343 governs. Essentially, the plaintiff is entitled to recover the difference between the actual value of that with which the defrauded person parted and the actual value of that which he or she received, together with any additional damages arising from the particular transaction, including any of the following: (i) amounts actually and reasonably expended in reliance upon the fraud; (ii) an amount that would compensate the defrauded party for loss of use and enjoyment of the property to the extent that any such loss was proximately caused by the fraud; and (iii) where the defrauded party was induced by reason of the fraud to sell or otherwise part with the property in question, an amount which would compensate him or her for profits or other gains that might reasonably have been earned by use of the property had he or she retained it.

• Additional damages are available for lost profits if the plaintiff was tricked into selling an income property. (Civ. Code, § 3343(a)(4).)

• The statute does not permit a plaintiff to recover the difference between the value of the property as represented and the actual value of the property, nor does it prevent the plaintiff to obtaining equitable remedies he or she might also be entitled to. (Civ. Code, § 3343(b).)

• In real property transactions, emotional distress damages are not recoverable. (Civ. Code, § 3343.)

— For fraud involving fiduciary relationships, a broader spectrum of damages is available, typically benefit of the bargain damages. (Civ. Code, §§ 1709, 3333.)

— Damages for emotional distress are available for some types of fraud that don’t involve real property. (*Sprague v. Frank J. Sanders Lincoln Mercury, Inc.* (1981) 120 Cal. App. 3d 412, 417 [“general damages for mental pain and suffering are recoverable in a tort action of deceit”].) For negligent misrepresentation cases, no emotional distress damages are available *unless* plaintiff suffers physical injury. (*Branch v. Homefed Bank* (1992) 6 Cal.App.4th, 793, 798-799.)

— Punitive damages are awardable where plaintiff shows by clear and convincing evidence that defendant was guilty of oppression, fraud, or malice. (Civ. Code, § 3294(a); *Godfrey v. Steinpress* (1982) 128 Cal.App.3d 154; *Wyatt v. Union Mortgage Co.* (1979) 24 Cal.3d 773, 790; *Branch v. Homefed Bank, supra,* 6 Cal.App.4th at 799.)

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

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— Where the essence of a claim is that defendant’s act constituted actual or constructive fraud, the claim is subject to the three-year limitations period. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338.)

— Otherwise, the statute of limitations is four years. (Code Civ. Proc., § 343; *William L. Lyon & Associates Inc. v. Sup. Ct.* (2012) 204 Cal.App.4th 1294, 1312.)

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 *intentional misrepresentation*. 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.

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.

— 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.”

## Conversion

Elements—Conversion

— To prevail on a claim for conversion, plaintiff must prove (i) his or her ownership/right to possess of the at-issue *personal property*; (ii) defendant’s wrongful exercise of control over that property; and (iii) damages. (*Welco Electronics, Inc. v. Mora* (2014) 223 Cal.App.4th 202, 208.)

— Conversion is a strict liability tort. (*Welco Electronics, Inc. v. Mora, supra,* 223 Cal.App.4th at 208.)

— Money can only be converted if the money that was taken is a specific sum capable of identification. (*Welco Electronics, Inc. v. Mora, supra,* 223 Cal.App.4th at p. 216.)

• For example, attorneys’ fees and costs have rightfully supported a conversion claim (*Murphy v. Am. Gen. Life Ins. Co.* (C.D. 2015) 74 F.Supp.3d 1267, 1280), as have: (i) settlement proceeds (*Gilman v. Dalby* (2009) 176 Cal.App.4th 606, 616); and (ii) funds sitting in bank accounts. (*Fong v. East West Bank* (2018) 19 Cal.App.5th 224, 231-33.)

— Defendant’s good faith, motive, or lack of knowledge in converting the personal property is irrelevant. (*Los Angeles Fed. Credit Union v. Madatyan* (2012) 209 Cal.App.4th 1383, 1388.)

— Conversion vs. trespass to chattels. 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 propert*y.

Remedies—

— Plaintiff is entitled to (i) the value of the property at the time of conversion, with interest from the date of conversion; and (ii) a fair compensation for the time and money expended pursuing the property. (*Virtanen v. O’Connell* (2006) 140 Cal.App.4th 688, 708; Civ. Code, § 3336.)

• If the property had special value to plaintiff, that value may be recovered if defendant knew the value in advance or was a willful wrongdoer. (Civ. Code, § 3355.)

— Emotional distress damages are available. (*Plotnik v. Meihaus* (2012) 208 Cal.App.4th 1590, 1605-07.)

— Attorneys’ fees incurred in seeking the recovery of the property are not recoverable. (*In re Martinez* (Bankr. N.D.Cal. 2019) 610 B.R. 290, 305.)

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

Applicable Statute of Limitations

— A claim for conversion must be brought within three years of the taking. (Code Civ. Proc., § 338(c).) The statute of limitations period begins running even if the owner was unaware of the conversion. (*Naftzger v. American Numismatic Society* (1996) 42 Cal.App.4th 421, 429; *Murphy v. Am. Gen. Life Ins. Co., supra,* 74 F.Supp.3d at 1280.) In other words, the “discovery” rule does not apply to conversion claims.

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*.

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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.”

## Fraudulent Transfer(Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act—Civil Code, § 3439 et seq.)

Elements— Uniform Fraudulent Transfer Act (UFTA)

— There are two types of fraudulent transfers—those made with the express intent to defraud a creditor and those made while the debtor is insolvent (otherwise known as *constructive fraud(ulent) intent*). With the former, the intent of the debtor is directly relevant, while with the latter intent is irrelevant, and the transfer may be deemed constructively fraudulent regardless of the debtor’s actual intent. (Civ. Code, §§3439.04 and 3439.05, respectively.)

• To prove a claim for fraudulent transfer where the express intent of the debtor is to defraud the creditor (i.e., transfer done with *actual intent*), a plaintiff must prove that a transfer was made (or an obligation was incurred) (i) with an actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud a creditor, or (ii) without receiving a reasonably equivalent value in exchange *and* the debtor was *either* (a) engaged in (or about to be engaged in) a business/transaction where the debtor’s assets were unreasonably small in relation to the business/transaction, or (b) intended to incur (or reasonably should’ve believed he or she would incur) debts beyond his or her ability to pay as they became due. (Civ. Code, § 3439.04.) Under this statute, it doesn’t matter whether the creditor’s claim existed before or after the transfer. (*Ibid*.)

→ A transfer will be deemed to have been made with the intent to hinder, delay, or defraud creditors when there is a specific intent to avoid a specific liability.

→ The intent at the time of the transfer is the primary consideration in such transfers. This “actual intent test” requires there to be a connection between the debtor and the creditor at the time of a transfer. So, if for example, a debtor transfers an asset at a time he or she has *no* creditors (or isn’t in the midst of a situation, such a lawsuit, where someone might become a creditor), the debtor will not have had the actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud the creditor at the time of the transfer.

→ Because proving actual intent is often impossible (How often does one have an audio/video of the debtor discussing his or her actual intent?), courts have developed several *“badges of fraud*” which, while not conclusive, are considered by courts as circumstantial evidence of fraud. The more common “badges of fraud” include things like: (i) becoming insolvent as a result of a transfer (see below); (ii) lack of (or inadequate) consideration; (iii) transfers between family members or other “insiders”; (iv) the debtor’s retention or possession of (or continued right to benefit from) transferred property; (v) the existence of the threat of (or actual) litigation; (vi) the existence or cumulative effect of a series of transactions after the debtor’s financial troubles started; (vii) the secrecy of the transaction; or (viii) a deviation from the normal course of business. The presence of one or more of these “badges of fraud” will shift the burden of proof from the plaintiff/creditor to the defendant/debtor. (Legislative Committee comment to Civ. Code, § 3439.04; See Civ. Code, § 3439.04(b); *Filip v. Bucurenciu* (2005) 129 Cal.App.4th 825, 834; *Annod Corp. v. Hamilton & Samuels* (2002) 100 Cal.App.4th 1286, 1298.)

• To prove a claim for fraudulent transfer where the debtor did not have an actual intent to hinder, delay, or defraud a creditor, a plaintiff must prove that (i) the plaintiff’s (i.e., creditor’s) claim arose *before* the transfer/obligation at issue, (ii) that the debtor made the transfer without receiving a reasonably equivalent value in exchange for the transfer/obligation, and (iii) that the debtor was either insolvent at the time of the transfer, or that the transfer itself caused the debtor’s insolvency. (Civ. Code, §3439.05.)

— A transfer of property by a debtor will be treated as a “transfer” for fraudulent transfer purposes only if the transfer puts beyond the creditor’s reach property that the creditor would otherwise be able seize to satisfy the debt. (*Mehrtash v. ATA Mehrtash* (2001) 93 Cal.App.4th 75 [the transfer of real property subject to encumbrances (i.e., existing liens or applicable exemptions) large enough to eliminate a property’s equity did *not* constitute a fraudulent transfer because the creditor couldn’t show how she was injured by the transfer]; *Fidelity National Title Ins. Co. v. Schroeder* (2009) 179 Cal.App.4th 834.) In other words, a transfer cannot be deemed “fraudulent” under the UFTA if it doesn’t diminish what a creditor may receive.

— The term “transfer” doesn’t just apply to transfers on their face. That term also applies to other events, such as: (i) inaction; (ii) a waiver of a defense; (iii) the termination of a lease; (iv) an extension of a loan; (v) a withdrawal of cash from an account; (vi) making a tax election; (vii) granting a security interest in a property; (viii) conversion of non-exempt assets into exempt assets; and/or (ix) rental of a property for less than its fair market value. Likewise, clerical actions (e.g., retitling a property to correct title), transfers required by law (e.g., transfer of assets ordered family court judge), or transfers by someone other than the debtor do not constitute voidable transfers.

— A debtor choosing to pay one creditor instead of another does not constitute a fraudulent transfer. (See Civ. Code, §3432.)

Remedies—

— Plaintiff is entitled to set aside the fraudulent conveyance and recover the asset(s) in question. (Civ. Code, §§ 3439.04 and 3439.05.)

— Plaintiff may be entitled to punitive damages if defendant acted intentionally and fraudulently, maliciously, or oppressively. (Civ. Code, § 3294.)

— Keep in mind that there are fraudulent transfers that leave a plaintiff with no recourse even if the plaintiff establishes actual intent to hinder, defraud, or delay. For example, transfers into ERISA qualified retirement plans *cannot* be voided even if fraud is proven. In that example, the federal ERISA statute trumps California’s fraudulent transfer laws, and thus the UFTA would simply not apply.

Applicable Statute of Limitations—

— A claim for fraudulent transfer with intent to hinder, delay, or defraud must be brought within four years after the transfer is made, or if later, then within one year after the transfer/obligation was (or could’ve reasonably) been discovered by the plaintiff/creditor. (Civ. Code, § 3439.09(a).)

— A claim for fraudulent transfer where equivalent value was not received in the transfer must be brought within four years after the transfer is made. (Civ. Code, § 3439.09(b).)

— “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a cause of action under this chapter with respect to a transfer or obligation is extinguished if no action is brought or levy made within seven years after the transfer was made or the obligation was incurred.” (Civ. Code, § 3439.09(c).) In other words, seven years is the ceiling regardless of what 3439.09(a) says.

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 *fraudulent transfer*. If one or more provisions of a contract is relevant, you should cite to such provision(s) here. *No need to quote or provide a snip from any other document.* Referring to the page/section/paragraph of the contract is sufficient.

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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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# STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

## Statute of Limitations

This section is *not* intended to address whether or not the statute of limitations has run on a particular cause of action that might have otherwise been relevant under the facts. Those specifics can be found in reference to each of the potential causes of action discussed above. This section of the LADD is intended only to highlight the earliest statute of limitations of a claim that remains available to Client.

If Client wants to file a lawsuit containing the applicable the causes of action discussed above, the action must be filed on or before **April 3, 2025** (the *earliest* of the applicable non-expired statutes of limitations deadlines given the desired causes of action).

## Jurisdiction

### Arbitration

Since Client did not execute any contract containing a binding arbitration provision, Client may file the lawsuit in the superior court of Orange County.

### Venue

Orange County is the correct venue for this lawsuit.

## 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).

## 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)

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## Attorneys’ Fees and Costs

The prevailing party is entitled to attorneys’ fees and costs under Section 23.4 of the Purchase Agreement.

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

None

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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