



COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLINIC

Highlighted Project: Shady Lane Mobilehome Park

In 2012, the clinic joined with California Rural Legal Assistance to represent residents of a mobile home park in the Coachella Valley in suing the owner for untenable living conditions. Most residents are farmworkers, living with inadequate electrical, water and sewage systems. During frequent summer electrical outages in sweltering desert temperatures, residents had no air conditioning. Raw sewage bubbled up inside and outside residents' units. In December 2014, the parties agreed to a settlement, providing our clients with the right to purchase the park.

At our clients' request, the clinic formed a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity, Shady Lane Mobilehome Park, Inc., to purchase the park. The clinic prepared and filed an application for a Conditional Use Permit with Riverside County to allow the park to operate legally. Clinic students launched an online crowdfunding campaign to raise funds and met with potential lenders. The clinic secured a \$250,000 state grant for planning and design to bring public water and sewers to the park, and another \$70,000 grant to provide drinking water. In 2016, Shady Lane borrowed funds from Caritas, Inc., a mission-driven housing organization, and became the new owner. Caritas manages the park and uses rental income to improve conditions. The clinic and Caritas have agreed that once the County issues the CUP, Shady Lane and Caritas will form a limited liability company to own and manage the park. When the park has public water and sewer, Caritas will become the owner.

This may be the first time a law school clinic litigated a habitability case and served as the de facto developer. The result is a tremendous improvement in our clients' lives. Many California farmworkers live in similar conditions. We hope to replicate this project for other clients.

Community and Economic Development Clinic

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The Community and Economic Development Clinic focuses on issues of community and economic development in low- and moderate-income populations, emphasizing non-adversarial, transactional approaches to advocacy. Nevertheless, because our primary concern is to solve our clients' problems by the most effective means available, the clinic also represents clients in litigation matters.

Our work focuses on housing and homelessness issues, small business and nonprofit development, community, and policy initiatives designed to improve our client communities. We represent a nonprofit corporation that operates a community garden in Ontario, a group of medical students who have formed a nonprofit to create and operate the first needle-exchange program in Orange County, and a group of small business owners seeking to preserve the identity of downtown Santa Ana. We also represent a nonprofit dedicated to the preservation of Mexican American culture in the Santa Ana community in its purchase and management of a building.

Many of our clients reside in mobile home parks, and much of our work revolves around the myriad problems of park residents. The clinic is counsel for farmworkers living in a substandard park in the Coachella Valley, low-income residents concerned about park management practices in San Bernardino, and residents seeking to purchase and operate a park in San Juan Capistrano. Through this work, we have become one of the primary resources in Southern California for pro bono legal services to mobile home park residents. Students and faculty travel to these sites to meet with clients, testify at public hearings and appear in court.