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Bird Marella Wins Pro Bono Case on Behalf of Low-Income Motel Residents

Bird Marella attorneys Julian Burns and Jeremy Matz alongside co-counsel won a permanent writ of mandate against a motel owner's Costa Mesa luxury housing project on Thursday. Back in early 2016, Julian and the Western Center on Law & Poverty began representing several impoverished long-term residents of a Costa Mesa motel who couldn't find affordable housing in the region. The motel's owner, in coordination with the City of Costa Mesa, proposed tearing down the motel and building a massive luxury apartment complex that the residents would not be able to afford. The City of Costa Mesa proceeded to grant re-zoning benefits, general plan amendments, and density incentives to the owner's project which would not have included a single affordable housing unit. This violated multiple state law provisions including the Density Bonus Law, Petitioners alleged, and the California Relocation Assistance Act.

A year ago, Julian won a preliminary injunction on behalf of the motel residents and stopped the luxury apartment project in its tracks. Now, with the permanent writ of mandate against the project, all the approvals and benefits granted by the City to enable the project are void, and the luxury housing project cannot be built. The case now moves into fighting for mandatory relocation assistance for the long-term residents who had been previously evicted.

Please click the following to read more from Orange County Register and Los Angeles Times.