

City of Costa Mesa Prevails in Defending Sober Living Home Regulations

The City of Costa Mesa prevailed in its defense of laws preventing the concentration of group sober living homes within the City.

Today a jury, convened in the Federal District Court for the Central District of California, delivered a unanimous verdict in support of the City's laws and efforts.

The case was filed in 2019. The plaintiffs are the operators of five locations that are in violation of the City's municipal code. The suit challenged the City's legislation that was developed to address concerns throughout the community about the proliferation of the facilities, negative impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods, and harm to those recovering from drug and alcohol dependence.

"We are grateful that the jury affirmed Costa Mesa's support of our neighborhoods and well-run, appropriately-sited group sober living homes," noted Costa Mesa Mayor John Stephens. "We've developed, enforced and defended our reasonable laws that prevent sober living home operators from preying upon and exploiting those suffering from addiction while restoring and maintaining the character of our neighborhoods. Our pioneering ordinances balance these important public safety interests. This verdict is yet another in a long string of victories in court that vindicate our approach."

For nearly a decade, the City has developed and refined a series of laws that have been widely successful in eliminating poorly-run homes and supporting the neighborhoods in which compliant facilities operate. Left unchecked, unregulated sober living homes often provided substandard or dangerous

care and disregarded regulations designed to help them be good neighbors.

The decision is expected to be appealed, and the City intends to continue its commitment to its residents and business operators, and most importantly, those seeking addiction treatment.

“We will likely face an appeal, however, the City will fight any attempts to weaken its ordinances related to group sober living homes,” added City Attorney Kimberly Hall Barlow.

The City has prevailed in numerous similar legal actions, reaffirming its right to enact ordinances in the best interests of the community. Other related cases are pending, and the City is confident it will continue to prevail.