

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 22, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 927

Introduced by Assembly Member Charles Calderon

February 26, 2009

An act to amend Section 1375 of the Civil Code, relating to common interest developments.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 927, as amended, Charles Calderon. Common interest developments: construction defects.

The Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act provides for the creation and regulation of common interest developments. The act requires, until July 1, 2010, with respect to certain common interest developments, that specified requirements be satisfied before an association files a complaint for damages against the builder, developer, or general contractor of the development based upon a claim for defects in the design or construction of the development. Those requirements include filing a notice regarding the commencement of legal proceedings, participating in a dispute resolution process, and preparing a case management statement, as specified.

This bill would ~~delete~~ *change* the expiration date for these provisions ~~and would thereby extend their operation indefinitely to July 1, 2017.~~

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1375 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1375. (a) Before an association files a complaint for damages against a builder, developer, or general contractor (“respondent”) of a common interest development based upon a claim for defects in the design or construction of the common interest development, all of the requirements of this section shall be satisfied with respect to the builder, developer, or general contractor.

(b) The association shall serve upon the respondent a “Notice of Commencement of Legal Proceedings.” The notice shall be served by certified mail to the registered agent of the respondent, or if there is no registered agent, then to any officer of the respondent. If there are no current officers of the respondent, service shall be upon the person or entity otherwise authorized by law to receive service of process. Service upon the general contractor shall be sufficient to initiate the process set forth in this section with regard to any builder or developer, if the builder or developer is not amenable to service of process by the foregoing methods. This notice shall toll all applicable statutes of limitation and repose, whether contractual or statutory, by and against all potentially responsible parties, regardless of whether they were named in the notice, including claims for indemnity applicable to the claim for the period set forth in subdivision (c). The notice shall include all of the following:

- (1) The name and location of the project.
 - (2) An initial list of defects sufficient to apprise the respondent of the general nature of the defects at issue.
 - (3) A description of the results of the defects, if known.
 - (4) A summary of the results of a survey or questionnaire distributed to homeowners to determine the nature and extent of defects, if a survey has been conducted or a questionnaire has been distributed.
 - (5) Either a summary of the results of testing conducted to determine the nature and extent of defects or the actual test results, if that testing has been conducted.
- (c) Service of the notice shall commence a period, not to exceed 180 days, during which the association, the respondent, and all other participating parties shall try to resolve the dispute through

the processes set forth in this section. This 180-day period may be extended for one additional period, not to exceed 180 days, only upon the mutual agreement of the association, the respondent, and any parties not deemed peripheral pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (e). Any extensions beyond the first extension shall require the agreement of all participating parties. Unless extended, the dispute resolution process prescribed by this section shall be deemed completed. All extensions shall continue the tolling period described in subdivision (b).

(d) Within 25 days of the date the association serves the Notice of Commencement of Legal Proceedings, the respondent may request in writing to meet and confer with the board of directors of the association. Unless the respondent and the association otherwise agree, there shall be not more than one meeting, which shall take place no later than 10 days from the date of the respondent's written request, at a mutually agreeable time and place. The meeting shall be subject to subdivision (b) of Section 1363.05. The discussions at the meeting are privileged communications and are not admissible in evidence in any civil action, unless the association and the respondent consent in writing to their admission.

(e) Upon receipt of the notice, the respondent shall, within 60 days, comply with the following:

(1) The respondent shall provide the association with access to, for inspection and copying, all plans and specifications, subcontracts, and other construction files for the project that are reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence regarding the defects claimed. The association shall provide the respondent with access to, for inspection and copying, all files reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence regarding the defects claimed, including all reserve studies, maintenance records and any survey questionnaires, or results of testing to determine the nature and extent of defects. To the extent any of the above documents are withheld based on privilege, a privilege log shall be prepared and submitted to all other parties. All other potentially responsible parties shall have the same rights as the respondent regarding the production of documents upon receipt of written notice of the claim, and shall produce all relevant documents within 60 days of receipt of the notice of the claim.

(2) The respondent shall provide written notice by certified mail to all subcontractors, design professionals, their insurers, and the insurers of any additional insured whose identity is known to the respondent or readily ascertainable by review of the project files or other similar sources and whose potential responsibility appears on the face of the notice. This notice to subcontractors, design professionals, and insurers shall include a copy of the Notice of Commencement of Legal Proceedings, and shall specify the date and manner by which the parties shall meet and confer to select a dispute resolution facilitator pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (f), advise the recipient of its obligation to participate in the meet and confer or serve a written acknowledgment of receipt regarding this notice, advise the recipient that it will waive any challenge to selection of the dispute resolution facilitator if it elects not to participate in the meet and confer, advise the recipient that it may be bound by any settlement reached pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 1375.05, advise the recipient that it may be deemed to have waived rights to conduct inspection and testing pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 1375.05, advise the recipient that it may seek the assistance of an attorney, and advise the recipient that it should contact its insurer, if any. Any subcontractor or design professional, or insurer for that subcontractor, design professional, or additional insured, who receives written notice from the respondent regarding the meet and confer shall, prior to the meet and confer, serve on the respondent a written acknowledgment of receipt. That subcontractor or design professional shall, within 10 days of service of the written acknowledgment of receipt, provide to the association and the respondent a Statement of Insurance that includes both of the following:

(A) The names, addresses, and contact persons, if known, of all insurance carriers, whether primary or excess and regardless of whether a deductible or self-insured retention applies, whose policies were in effect from the commencement of construction of the subject project to the present and potentially cover the subject claims.

(B) The applicable policy numbers for each policy of insurance provided.

(3) Any subcontractor or design professional, or insurer for that subcontractor, design professional, or additional insured, who so chooses, may, at any time, make a written request to the dispute

1 resolution facilitator for designation as a peripheral party. That
 2 request shall be served contemporaneously on the association and
 3 the respondent. If no objection to that designation is received within
 4 15 days, or upon rejection of that objection, the dispute resolution
 5 facilitator shall designate that subcontractor or design professional
 6 as a peripheral party, and shall thereafter seek to limit the
 7 attendance of that subcontractor or design professional only to
 8 those dispute resolution sessions deemed peripheral party sessions
 9 or to those sessions during which the dispute resolution facilitator
 10 believes settlement as to peripheral parties may be finalized.
 11 Nothing in this subdivision shall preclude a party who has been
 12 designated a peripheral party from being reclassified as a
 13 nonperipheral party, nor shall this subdivision preclude a party
 14 designated as a nonperipheral party from being reclassified as a
 15 peripheral party after notice to all parties and an opportunity to
 16 object. For purposes of this subdivision, a peripheral party is a
 17 party having total claimed exposure of less than twenty-five
 18 thousand dollars (\$25,000).

19 (f) (1) Within 20 days of sending the notice set forth in
 20 paragraph (2) of subdivision (e), the association, respondent,
 21 subcontractors, design professionals, and their insurers who have
 22 been sent a notice as described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (e)
 23 shall meet and confer in an effort to select a dispute resolution
 24 facilitator to preside over the mandatory dispute resolution process
 25 prescribed by this section. Any subcontractor or design professional
 26 who has been given timely notice of this meeting but who does
 27 not participate waives any challenge he or she may have as to the
 28 selection of the dispute resolution facilitator. The role of the dispute
 29 resolution facilitator is to attempt to resolve the conflict in a fair
 30 manner. The dispute resolution facilitator shall be sufficiently
 31 knowledgeable in the subject matter and be able to devote sufficient
 32 time to the case. The dispute resolution facilitator shall not be
 33 required to reside in or have an office in the county in which the
 34 project is located. The dispute resolution facilitator and the
 35 participating parties shall agree to a date, time, and location to
 36 hold a case management meeting of all parties and the dispute
 37 resolution facilitator to discuss the claims being asserted and the
 38 scheduling of events under this section. The case management
 39 meeting with the dispute resolution facilitator shall be held within
 40 100 days of service of the Notice of Commencement of Legal

1 Proceedings at a location in the county where the project is located.
2 Written notice of the case management meeting with the dispute
3 resolution facilitator shall be sent by the respondent to the
4 association, subcontractors and design professionals, and their
5 insurers who are known to the respondent to be on notice of the
6 claim, no later than 10 days prior to the case management meeting,
7 and shall specify its date, time, and location. The dispute resolution
8 facilitator in consultation with the respondent shall maintain a
9 contact list of the participating parties.

10 (2) No later than 10 days prior to the case management meeting,
11 the dispute resolution facilitator shall disclose to the parties all
12 matters that could cause a person aware of the facts to reasonably
13 entertain a doubt that the proposed dispute resolution facilitator
14 would be able to resolve the conflict in a fair manner. The
15 facilitator's disclosure shall include the existence of any ground
16 specified in Section 170.1 of the Code of Civil Procedure for
17 disqualification of a judge, any attorney-client relationship the
18 facilitator has or had with any party or lawyer for a party to the
19 dispute resolution process, and any professional or significant
20 personal relationship the facilitator or his or her spouse or minor
21 child living in the household has or had with any party to the
22 dispute resolution process. The disclosure shall also be provided
23 to any subsequently noticed subcontractor or design professional
24 within 10 days of the notice.

25 (3) A dispute resolution facilitator shall be disqualified by the
26 court if he or she fails to comply with this paragraph and any party
27 to the dispute resolution process serves a notice of disqualification
28 prior to the case management meeting. If the dispute resolution
29 facilitator complies with this paragraph, he or she shall be
30 disqualified by the court on the basis of the disclosure if any party
31 to the dispute resolution process serves a notice of disqualification
32 prior to the case management meeting.

33 (4) If the parties cannot mutually agree to a dispute resolution
34 facilitator, then each party shall submit a list of three dispute
35 resolution facilitators. Each party may then strike one nominee
36 from the other parties' list, and petition the court, pursuant to the
37 procedure described in subdivisions (n) and (o), for final selection
38 of the dispute resolution facilitator. The court may issue an order
39 for final selection of the dispute resolution facilitator pursuant to
40 this paragraph.

1 (5) Any subcontractor or design professional who receives notice
2 of the association's claim without having previously received
3 timely notice of the meet and confer to select the dispute resolution
4 facilitator shall be notified by the respondent regarding the name,
5 address, and telephone number of the dispute resolution facilitator.
6 Any such subcontractor or design professional may serve upon
7 the parties and the dispute resolution facilitator a written objection
8 to the dispute resolution facilitator within 15 days of receiving
9 notice of the claim. Within seven days after service of this
10 objection, the subcontractor or design professional may petition
11 the superior court to replace the dispute resolution facilitator. The
12 court may replace the dispute resolution facilitator only upon a
13 showing of good cause, liberally construed. Failure to satisfy the
14 deadlines set forth in this subdivision shall constitute a waiver of
15 the right to challenge the dispute resolution facilitator.

16 (6) The costs of the dispute resolution facilitator shall be
17 apportioned in the following manner: one-third to be paid by the
18 association; one-third to be paid by the respondent; and one-third
19 to be paid by the subcontractors and design professionals, as
20 allocated among them by the dispute resolution facilitator. The
21 costs of the dispute resolution facilitator shall be recoverable by
22 the prevailing party in any subsequent litigation pursuant to Section
23 1032 of the Code of Civil Procedure, provided however that any
24 nonsettling party may, prior to the filing of the complaint, petition
25 the facilitator to reallocate the costs of the dispute resolution
26 facilitator as they apply to any nonsettling party. The determination
27 of the dispute resolution facilitator with respect to the allocation
28 of these costs shall be binding in any subsequent litigation. The
29 dispute resolution facilitator shall take into account all relevant
30 factors and equities between all parties in the dispute resolution
31 process when reallocating costs.

32 (7) In the event the dispute resolution facilitator is replaced at
33 any time, the case management statement created pursuant to
34 subdivision (h) shall remain in full force and effect.

35 (8) The dispute resolution facilitator shall be empowered to
36 enforce all provisions of this section.

37 (g) (1) No later than the case management meeting, the parties
38 shall begin to generate a data compilation showing the following
39 information regarding the alleged defects at issue:

1 (A) The scope of the work performed by each potentially
2 responsible subcontractor.

3 (B) The tract or phase number in which each subcontractor
4 provided goods or services, or both.

5 (C) The units, either by address, unit number, or lot number, at
6 which each subcontractor provided goods or services, or both.

7 (2) This data compilation shall be updated as needed to reflect
8 additional information. Each party attending the case management
9 meeting, and any subsequent meeting pursuant to this section, shall
10 provide all information available to that party relevant to this data
11 compilation.

12 (h) At the case management meeting, the parties shall, with the
13 assistance of the dispute resolution facilitator, reach agreement on
14 a case management statement, which shall set forth all of the
15 elements set forth in paragraphs (1) to (8), inclusive, except that
16 the parties may dispense with one or more of these elements if
17 they agree that it is appropriate to do so. The case management
18 statement shall provide that the following elements shall take place
19 in the following order:

20 (1) Establishment of a document depository, located in the
21 county where the project is located, for deposit of documents,
22 defect lists, demands, and other information provided for under
23 this section. All documents exchanged by the parties and all
24 documents created pursuant to this subdivision shall be deposited
25 in the document depository, which shall be available to all parties
26 throughout the prefiling dispute resolution process and in any
27 subsequent litigation. When any document is deposited in the
28 document depository, the party depositing the document shall
29 provide written notice identifying the document to all other parties.
30 The costs of maintaining the document depository shall be
31 apportioned among the parties in the same manner as the costs of
32 the dispute resolution facilitator.

33 (2) Provision of a more detailed list of defects by the association
34 to the respondent after the association completes a visual inspection
35 of the project. This list of defects shall provide sufficient detail
36 for the respondent to ensure that all potentially responsible
37 subcontractors and design professionals are provided with notice
38 of the dispute resolution process. If not already completed prior
39 to the case management meeting, the Notice of Commencement
40 of Legal Proceedings shall be served by the respondent on all

1 additional subcontractors and design professionals whose potential
2 responsibility appears on the face of the more detailed list of
3 defects within seven days of receipt of the more detailed list. The
4 respondent shall serve a copy of the case management statement,
5 including the name, address, and telephone number of the dispute
6 resolution facilitator, to all the potentially responsible
7 subcontractors and design professionals at the same time.

8 (3) Nonintrusive visual inspection of the project by the
9 respondent, subcontractors, and design professionals.

10 (4) Invasive testing conducted by the association, as the
11 association deems appropriate. All parties may observe and
12 photograph any testing conducted by the association pursuant to
13 this paragraph, but may not take samples or direct testing unless,
14 by mutual agreement, costs of testing are shared by the parties.

15 (5) Provision by the association of a comprehensive demand
16 that provides sufficient detail for the parties to engage in
17 meaningful dispute resolution as contemplated under this section.

18 (6) Invasive testing conducted by the respondent, subcontractors,
19 and design professionals, as they deem appropriate.

20 (7) Allowance for modification of the demand by the association
21 if new issues arise during the testing conducted by the respondent,
22 subcontractor, or design professionals.

23 (8) Facilitated dispute resolution of the claim, with all parties,
24 including peripheral parties, as appropriate, and insurers, if any,
25 present and having settlement authority. The dispute resolution
26 facilitators shall endeavor to set specific times for the attendance
27 of specific parties at dispute resolution sessions. If the dispute
28 resolution facilitator does not set specific times for the attendance
29 of parties at dispute resolution sessions, the dispute resolution
30 facilitator shall permit those parties to participate in dispute
31 resolution sessions by telephone.

32 (i) In addition to the foregoing elements of the case management
33 statement described in subdivision (h), upon mutual agreement of
34 the parties, the dispute resolution facilitator may include any or
35 all of the following elements in a case management statement: the
36 exchange of consultant or expert photographs; expert presentations;
37 expert meetings; or any other mechanism deemed appropriate by
38 the parties in the interest of resolving the dispute.

39 (j) The dispute resolution facilitator, with the guidance of the
40 parties, shall at the time the case management statement is

1 established, set deadlines for the occurrence of each event set forth
2 in the case management statement, taking into account such factors
3 as the size and complexity of the case, and the requirement of this
4 section that this dispute resolution process not exceed 180 days
5 absent agreement of the parties to an extension of time.

6 (k) (1) (A) At a time to be determined by the dispute resolution
7 facilitator, the respondent may submit to the association all of the
8 following:

9 (i) A request to meet with the board to discuss a written
10 settlement offer.

11 (ii) A written settlement offer, and a concise explanation of the
12 reasons for the terms of the offer.

13 (iii) A statement that the respondent has access to sufficient
14 funds to satisfy the conditions of the settlement offer.

15 (iv) A summary of the results of testing conducted for the
16 purposes of determining the nature and extent of defects, if this
17 testing has been conducted, unless the association provided the
18 respondent with actual test results.

19 (B) If the respondent does not timely submit the items required
20 by this subdivision, the association shall be relieved of any further
21 obligation to satisfy the requirements of this subdivision only.

22 (C) No less than 10 days after the respondent submits the items
23 required by this paragraph, the respondent and the board of
24 directors of the association shall meet and confer about the
25 respondent's settlement offer.

26 (D) If the association's board of directors rejects a settlement
27 offer presented at the meeting held pursuant to this subdivision,
28 the board shall hold a meeting open to each member of the
29 association. The meeting shall be held no less than 15 days before
30 the association commences an action for damages against the
31 respondent.

32 (E) No less than 15 days before this meeting is held, a written
33 notice shall be sent to each member of the association specifying
34 all of the following:

35 (i) That a meeting will take place to discuss problems that may
36 lead to the filing of a civil action, and the time and place of this
37 meeting.

38 (ii) The options that are available to address the problems,
39 including the filing of a civil action and a statement of the various
40 alternatives that are reasonably foreseeable by the association to

1 pay for those options and whether these payments are expected to
2 be made from the use of reserve account funds or the imposition
3 of regular or special assessments, or emergency assessment
4 increases.

5 (iii) The complete text of any written settlement offer, and a
6 concise explanation of the specific reasons for the terms of the
7 offer submitted to the board at the meeting held pursuant to
8 subdivision (d) that was received from the respondent.

9 (F) The respondent shall pay all expenses attributable to sending
10 the settlement offer to all members of the association. The
11 respondent shall also pay the expense of holding the meeting, not
12 to exceed three dollars (\$3) per association member.

13 (G) The discussions at the meeting and the contents of the notice
14 and the items required to be specified in the notice pursuant to
15 paragraph (E) are privileged communications and are not
16 admissible in evidence in any civil action, unless the association
17 consents to their admission.

18 (H) No more than one request to meet and discuss a written
19 settlement offer may be made by the respondent pursuant to this
20 subdivision.

21 (I) Except for the purpose of in camera review as provided in
22 subdivision (c) of Section 1375.05, all defect lists and demands,
23 communications, negotiations, and settlement offers made in the
24 course of the prelitigation dispute resolution process provided by
25 this section shall be inadmissible pursuant to Sections 1119 to
26 1124, inclusive, of the Evidence Code and all applicable decisional
27 law. This inadmissibility shall not be extended to any other
28 documents or communications which would not otherwise be
29 deemed inadmissible.

30 (m) Any subcontractor or design professional may, at any time,
31 petition the dispute resolution facilitator to release that party from
32 the dispute resolution process upon a showing that the
33 subcontractor or design professional is not potentially responsible
34 for the defect claims at issue. The petition shall be served
35 contemporaneously on all other parties, who shall have 15 days
36 from the date of service to object. If a subcontractor or design
37 professional is released, and it later appears to the dispute
38 resolution facilitator that it may be a responsible party in light of
39 the current defect list or demand, the respondent shall renote the
40 party as provided by paragraph (2) of subdivision (e), provide a

1 copy of the current defect list or demand, and direct the party to
2 attend a dispute resolution session at a stated time and location. A
3 party who subsequently appears after having been released by the
4 dispute resolution facilitator shall not be prejudiced by its absence
5 from the dispute resolution process as the result of having been
6 previously released by the dispute resolution facilitator.

7 (n) Any party may, at any time, petition the superior court in
8 the county where the project is located, upon a showing of good
9 cause, and the court may issue an order, for any of the following,
10 or for appointment of a referee to resolve a dispute regarding any
11 of the following:

12 (1) To take a deposition of any party to the process, or subpoena
13 a third party for deposition or production of documents, that is
14 necessary to further prelitigation resolution of the dispute.

15 (2) To resolve any disputes concerning inspection, testing,
16 production of documents, or exchange of information provided
17 for under this section.

18 (3) To resolve any disagreements relative to the timing or
19 contents of the case management statement.

20 (4) To authorize internal extensions of timeframes set forth in
21 the case management statement.

22 (5) To seek a determination that a settlement is a good faith
23 settlement pursuant to Section 877.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure
24 and all related authorities. The page limitations and meet and confer
25 requirements specified in this section shall not apply to these
26 motions, which may be made on shortened notice. Instead, these
27 motions shall be subject to other applicable state law, rules of
28 court, and local rules. A determination made by the court pursuant
29 to this motion shall have the same force and effect as the
30 determination of a postfiling application or motion for good faith
31 settlement.

32 (6) To ensure compliance, on shortened notice, with the
33 obligation to provide a Statement of Insurance pursuant to
34 paragraph (2) of subdivision (e).

35 (7) For any other relief appropriate to the enforcement of the
36 provisions of this section, including the ordering of parties, and
37 insurers, if any, to the dispute resolution process with settlement
38 authority.

39 (o) (1) A petition filed pursuant to subdivision (n) shall be filed
40 in the superior court in the county in which the project is located.

1 The court shall hear and decide the petition within 10 days after
2 filing. The petitioning party shall serve the petition on all parties,
3 including the date, time, and location of the hearing no later than
4 five business days prior to the hearing. Any responsive papers
5 shall be filed and served no later than three business days prior to
6 the hearing. Any petition or response filed under this section shall
7 be no more than three pages in length.

8 (2) All parties shall meet with the dispute resolution facilitator,
9 if one has been appointed and confer in person or by the telephone
10 prior to the filing of that petition to attempt to resolve the matter
11 without requiring court intervention.

12 (p) As used in this section:

13 (1) "Association" shall have the same meaning as defined in
14 subdivision (a) of Section 1351.

15 (2) "Builder" means the declarant, as defined in subdivision (g)
16 of Section 1351.

17 (3) "Common interest development" shall have the same
18 meaning as in subdivision (c) of Section 1351, except that it shall
19 not include developments or projects with less than 20 units.

20 (q) The alternative dispute resolution process and procedures
21 described in this section shall have no application or legal effect
22 other than as described in this section.

23 (r) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2002, however
24 it shall not apply to any pending suit or claim for which notice has
25 previously been given.

26 (s) *This section shall become inoperative on July 1, 2017, and,*
27 *as of January 1, 2018, is repealed, unless a later enacted statute,*
28 *that becomes operative on or before January 1, 2018, deletes or*
29 *extends the dates on which it becomes inoperative and is repealed.*