



EMPOWERMENT PEOPLE: Attorneys, community members and the East LA Community Corporation worked to save Casa Del Mexicano.



We help people unlock their power, to raise their families, and Public Counsel has been a key partner,” said East LA Community Corporation Executive Director Maria Cabildo. “We wouldn’t have been able to afford the amazing legal assistance on our own.”

CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LOS ANGELES’ BOYLE HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD has been an immigrant crossroads for a century. Hard-working Jewish, Japanese and Mexican immigrants have all called it home.

Casa Del Mexicano is part of this rich history. Built in 1901 as a church, in the 1930s it became a self-help center for the community during the era when thousands of Mexican citizens were being sent home, blamed for stealing scarce jobs during the Great Depression.

By the 2000s, it had fallen into disrepair, and the California Attorney General’s office took the rare action to dissolve the nonprofit that had mismanaged the historic space.

The East LA Community Corporation was selected to redevelop the property for the benefit of the local community, but was first required to pay a \$440,000 prior lien or lose the building to

foreclosure. Public Counsel *pro bono* attorney Rosemary Lemmis or Davies Lemmis Raphaely Law Corporation stepped in to help the group obtain clear title. She was supported by the forensic accounting work of Public Counsel Board Member Michael Spindler of Navigant to evaluate the validity of the lien, and litigation attorneys Benjamin Lichtman and Ronald Nessim of Bird, Marella, Boxer, Wolpert, Nessim, Drooks & Lincenberg, P.C. and Ted Boxer to address the foreclosure threat.

Thanks to our team’s help, Casa Del Mexicano will again be a source of support and pride to the whole community.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Public Counsel Community Development Director Shashi Hanuman and Senior Staff Attorney Sarah Stegemoeller with Boyle Heights residents Leticia Andrade, grandson Benjamin, and Hermenegildo Ortega; ornate murals inside Casa Del Mexicano; the front of the 113-year-old building.