



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2006
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CRT
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TDD (202) 514-1888

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REACHES FAIR HOUSING ACT SETTLEMENT WITH KANSAS APARTMENT COMPLEXES

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today settled a lawsuit against a group of developers, builders, architects and engineers who designed and constructed two apartment complexes in Olathe, Kan. The complaint, filed on April 15, 2002, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas, alleged that the defendants violated federal civil rights laws by designing and constructing the Ridgeview and Indian Meadows apartment complexes without required features for persons with disabilities. The lawsuit arose as a result of a referral to the Department of Justice by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“Persons with disabilities should not be precluded from choosing where to live because of an unlawful lack of accessibility,” said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “The Civil Rights Division is committed to enforcing the federal fair housing laws.”

The settlement, which must be approved by the court, requires the owners of the complexes to retrofit parking areas, paths and walkways, public and common-use areas, as well as the interiors of ground-floor units, to enhance the accessibility of the complexes to disabled residents and their guests for an estimated cost of about \$1.2 million. In addition, the defendants are required to establish funds to pay for enhanced accessibility features upon request, for a total of \$200,000, provide \$200,000 in damages for unidentified victims, and pay \$50,000 in civil penalties. The settlement also requires the defendants to obtain training on the requirements of the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. Since Jan. 1, 2001, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division has filed 211 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, including 97 based on disability discrimination. More information about the Civil Rights

Division and the laws it enforces can be found on the Justice Department Web site,
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.

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