

Lesbian couple wins settlement in lawsuit over housing refusal

A lesbian couple in Ann Arbor has accepted a settlement in their lawsuit against a federally funded apartment cooperative that refused to rent to them because they said on an application that they were married.

Gretchen Fogel and Carla Daniels, who have lived together as a lesbian couple for more than 15 years, applied in 1991 for an apartment at the University Townhouses, a non-profit cooperative on the south side of Ann Arbor.

The cooperative application said then that the co-op would rent only to families, unmarried couples that included a male and female partner, and single persons living alone.

Their application as a gay couple was rejected, although co-op managers later offered to allow the women to apply separately. The women refused.

When they filed suit last year in Washtenaw Circuit Court, the couple's Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County at-

torney, Helen Gallagher, said the women "were only asking to be treated as a family — the family they have been to each other for many years."

The suit cited the state's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, and the city of Ann Arbor's Human Rights ordinance, one of the few local laws in the state to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"I'm delighted with the outcome. It is important to recognize the diversity among families today, and to understand that

same sex couples are families and ought to be treated that way under the law," Gallagher said after the settlement.

According to a settlement reached this week, the cooperative will "treat same sex couples in the same manner as it treats unmarried couples and married couples."

The women also accepted an undisclosed payment, and the apartments will pay for their moving expenses into the complex, if the women seek an apartment and are approved.