

Owners of 7 Lansing-area apartments settle bias suit

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The U.S. Justice Department settled a lawsuit against owners and operators of seven Michigan apartment complexes over allegations they discriminated against families with children in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

The lawsuit, filed in November 2015, alleged rental manager Sudi Hopper as well as the corporate entities that own the complexes, Parkside East Inc., Holt Manor Inc. and Kelly Manor Inc., prohibited families with children from renting one-bedroom units in apartment complexes.

The allegations were based on evidence from the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan, which had testers posing as prospective residents contact the defendants and ask to rent one-bedroom apartments. Testers who said they wanted to rent an apartment with their child were told that children were not allowed in one-bedroom units.

Under the consent decree, which still must be approved by the court, the defendants would create a settlement fund of \$20,000 to compensate victims of their discriminatory practices. The defendants also would pay \$5,000 in civil penalties to the U.S. government.

The decree requires the defendants to eliminate restrictions on children they imposed at the seven complexes they own and operate.

The complexes in the case are Parkside East Apartments in East Lansing; Holt Manor Apartments and C and H Apartments in Holt; Kelly Manor Apartments in Owosso; Camelot Apartments in Lansing; Pine Cove Apartments in DeWitt; and Park Place Apartments in Williamston.

The agreement also requires that defendants inform tenants of their new nondiscriminatory policies and provide training on the Fair Housing Act to their staff and agents.

U.S. Attorney Barbara L. McQuade in Detroit said the law prohibits landlords from refusing to rent to people with children.

"We commend the defendants in this case for agreeing to change their policies and pay damages to victims for their past discriminatory practices. This settlement will further the goal of the Fair Housing Act to protect families from discrimination because they have children," McQuade said.

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