



## — THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

### **Suit claims racial bias in rentals**

**Evidence compiled in 10-year probe at Ivanhoe apartments**

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**BY ART AISNER AND JOHN MULCAHY**

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The Ann Arbor-based Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan has filed a racial discrimination suit against an Ann Arbor housing complex after a decade-long investigation.

The suit, filed Wednesday in Detroit federal court, alleges the resident manager of the Ivanhoe House Apartments at 1533 Pine Valley Blvd., and parent company Acme Investments Inc., consistently discriminated against minorities seeking housing over a 10-year period.

During that time the center sent teams of black and white prospective residents to the complex, and it claims that management consistently and repeatedly misrepresented the availability of apartments. The suit also alleges the apartment managers delayed applications and discouraged prospective renters based on race or color.

David Lebenbom, listed by the Michigan Department of Labor, Energy and Economic Growth as president of Acme Investments in Troy, did not return a phone call Wednesday.

The lawsuit highlights one instance in April 2008 where the white team was shown a two-bedroom apartment and told it would be available within two weeks. Within the hour, a black woman seeking the same type of apartment was told none was available to view and that no vacancies were scheduled until that July or August. An hour later, a second white team visited the complex and was shown the same apartment as the previous white prospective renters.

The pattern is a clear violation of the U.S. Fair Housing Act and the Civil Rights Act, the suit alleges.

Pam Kisch, executive director of the Fair Housing Center, said it received numerous complaints about the Ivanhoe complex over the years and that they delayed filing the suit to compile more evidence with their scarce resources.

The enforcement program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The center investigates housing discrimination claims based on race or gender in six Michigan counties.

Kisch said no criminal charges have been filed against the company, but that the center is in close contact with officials from the Justice Department who are monitoring the findings.

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