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Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Alleging Racial Discrimination at Ann Arbor, Michigan, Michigan Apartment Complex

WASHINGTON – The owners and operators of Ivanhoe House Apartments, an apartment complex in Ann Arbor, Mich., have agreed to pay \$82,500 to settle a lawsuit filed by the Justice Department alleging that they had discriminated against African-American home-seekers, in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

The Justice Department's lawsuit, which was handled jointly by attorneys from the Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan, was filed in March 2010. The lawsuit was based upon evidence generated by a series of fair housing tests conducted by the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan, a private non-profit organization located in Ann Arbor. In the tests, individuals posed as prospective renters for purposes of determining whether the defendants were providing equal treatment to similarly situated home seekers in compliance with the Fair Housing Act.

As alleged in the complaint, the testing revealed that Ivanhoe House Apartments repeatedly and consistently treated African-American apartment-seekers less favorably than white apartment-seekers. Specifically, the complaint alleged that Ivanhoe House Apartments denied the availability of apartments to African-Americans, failed to show them available apartments, and/or quoted them later dates of availability than they quoted to white persons. A separate federal lawsuit was filed by the Fair Housing Center. Today's settlement resolves both lawsuits.

"Racial discrimination in housing harms not only those who were denied housing, but also the communities in which they live," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division. "Today's settlement is a clear signal of our commitment to vigorously enforce the Fair Housing Act and to fight illegal discrimination in housing."

"Unfortunately, racial discrimination in housing persists in Michigan and elsewhere," said Barbara L. McQuade, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. "We will continue to protect the rights of all persons in this District to obtain the housing of their choice free from unlawful discrimination."

Under the settlement, which must still be approved by U.S. District Court Judge Sean F. Cox, the defendants will pay \$35,000 in damages to three victims who the United States contends were discriminated against because of their race at Ivanhoe House Apartments; pay \$7,500 in a civil penalty to the United States; and pay \$40,000 to the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan as damages for the non-profit's efforts in testing and investigating the apartment complex. The settlement also requires the defendants and their employees to undergo fair housing training, conduct self-testing of the apartment complex, and provide periodic reports to the Justice Department and the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and familial status. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at www.justice.gov/crt. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, email the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777.