



**WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & URBAN AFFAIRS**

For Immediate Release

**NATIONAL DEVELOPER AGREES TO GROUNDBREAKING EFFORT
TO PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE HOUSING**

WASHINGTON, DC, July 17, 2007--The Equal Rights Center, a Washington, DC-based civil rights organization, announced today a precedent-setting settlement of a major lawsuit against Bozzuto & Associates, one of the largest apartment, condominium, and single-family home developers in the Eastern United States.

The lawsuit, filed in September 2005, alleged that Bozzuto, headquartered in Greenbelt, MD, discriminated against persons with disabilities by building dozens of apartment and condominium complexes in Maryland, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia that did not fully comply with the accessibility features required by the federal Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In resolving the lawsuit, Bozzuto has agreed to take sweeping actions to increase the availability of accessible housing in the area. In addition to retrofitting over 2,000 existing apartment and condominium units at 27 area complexes to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, Bozzuto will be including innovative accessibility features in many of its newly constructed townhomes and single family homes.

In announcing the settlement, Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, Executive Director of the Equal Right Center said, "As far as I know, the ERC is the first private not-for-profit civil rights organization to work out a settlement with a developer that will extend accessibility features to residences beyond those covered by the law. The Bozzuto and ERC teams reached a remarkable result that is socially responsible and terribly needed. Given that there are more than fifty-five million Americans with disabilities, this settlement should be good for business too."

Under the Consent Decree filed today, following property surveys, Bozzuto will make any necessary alterations to thousands of apartment and condo units to maximize accessibility to persons with disabilities. The alterations may include the removal of steps at entrances, widening doors, expansion of floor space in kitchens and bathrooms, relocation of switches, controls and electrical outlets to accessible heights, and modifications of leasing offices, club houses, parking lots and sidewalks.

"I hope other developers will be inspired to work with the ERC to make sure their existing multi-family properties meet accessibility standards and to also include accessibility features in single family homes and townhomes they bring to the market place, even though not required to do so by the law," Rabbi Kahn added. "On behalf of people with disabilities everywhere, we are very pleased that Bozzuto has proven to be

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sufficiently forward looking to undertake this cutting edge agreement.”

“This case is historic not just in terms of the number of complexes and housing units covered, but also because a major player in the housing industry has recognized the need to voluntarily step up to provide accessible housing in excess of what the law requires,” said Rod Boggs, Executive Director of the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs, co-counsel on behalf of the Equal Rights Center. “We commend Bozzuto for its progressive thinking, and we hope that other developers, architects and construction companies around the country come to the same conclusion that compliance with the law, and a commitment to accessible housing is the right thing to do,” he concluded.

Douglas Baruch, a litigation partner with the Washington, DC law firm of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP, who represented the Equal Rights Center in this lawsuit noted, “From the outset of this case, the number one goal of the ERC was to maximize the availability of accessible housing in properties designed and constructed by Bozzuto. With this settlement, we achieved that goal and more. We welcome Bozzuto’s willingness to work with the ERC to achieve this result and to develop and expand accessibility features into townhomes and single family homes.”

The Equal Rights Center is a private, not-for-profit, civil rights agency that is dedicated to identifying, challenging, and eliminating discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and government services through education, research, testing, counseling, enforcement, and advocacy. To obtain more information about the Equal Rights Center, please go to www.equalrightscenter.org or call the Equal Rights Center at (202) 234-3062.

The Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs was established in 1968 to provide pro bono legal services to address issues of discrimination and entrenched poverty. Since its founding, the Committee has handled more than 5,000 cases on behalf of individuals and advocacy organizations in the areas of equal employment, fair housing, public accommodations, public education, asylum and refugee rights, and disability rights. For more information about the Committee, see www.washlaw.org. The Committee can be reached at (202) 319-1000.

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