



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE  
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS & URBAN AFFAIRS

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **EQUAL RIGHTS CENTER BATTLES AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING— SUIT FILED AGAINST NATIONAL DEVELOPER, CB RICHARD ELLIS GROUP/TRAMMELL CROW**

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 5, 2007--The Equal Rights Center, represented by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and the law firm of Crowell & Moring LLP, announced today that it has filed a federal lawsuit against CB Richard Ellis Group and its wholly owned subsidiary, Trammell Crow, alleging discrimination by the nation-wide developers against persons with disabilities.

The lawsuit by the Equal Rights Center highlights the issue of residential apartment and condominium developers who are failing to include in their residential housing the basic features of accessibility required by federal civil rights laws. Today's complaint alleges that Trammell Crow has engaged in continuous and systemic civil rights violations of the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act in the design and construction of no less than 217 apartment complexes in 21 states and the District of Columbia. The number of affected housing units totals tens of thousands of individual apartment units.

Trammell Crow was, until December, 2006, a publicly traded developer of both commercial and multi-family housing. In late 2006, CB Richard Ellis Group acquired Trammell Crow in a merger transaction with a reported price of approximately \$2.2 billion.

"Housing is a fundamental need and right for everyone, including the 50 million or more people in the United States with disabilities. A nation-wide developer with a profile as large as Trammell Crow should be in the forefront of providing accessible housing rather than housing that, because of inaccessibility, bars people with disabilities from living at its properties." said Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, the Executive Director of the Equal Rights Center. "At the Equal Rights Center we are committed to doing everything we can to convince the housing industry that it should, and must, treat all people fairly under the law, and this lawsuit against CB Richard Ellis and Trammell Crow is the latest demonstration of that commitment." concluded Rabbi Kahn.

According to the complaint, an Equal Rights Center investigation discovered numerous accessibility violations at more than 40 of Trammell Crow's properties, including inaccessible ramp routes, stairs obstructing entrances, a lack of accessible parking, and apartment designs that did not allow a person in a wheelchair to maneuver about kitchens and bathrooms in units.

"In 1988 Congress required developers to include basic features of accessibility in all newly-constructed multi-family housing, and gave them 2 1/2 years to come into compliance with the law." said Isabelle M. Thabault, Director of the Fair Housing Project at the Washington Lawyers' Committee. "Unfortunately, nearly twenty years later, major developers like Trammell Crow continue to build apartment complexes that are difficult or impossible to access by persons who use wheelchairs."

Trammel Crow 1.../2



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The federal Fair Housing Act requires all covered multi-family dwellings, built for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, to be designed and constructed in a manner that incorporates certain basic features of both accessibility and adaptable design including usable doors, kitchens and bathrooms, reinforced walls for grab bars and accessible and usable public and common use areas.

The Equal Rights Center is a private, not-for-profit, civil rights organization that is dedicated to identifying, challenging, and eliminating discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and government services through outreach, education, research, testing, counseling, enforcement, and advocacy. To obtain more information about the Equal Rights Center, please go to [www.equalrightscenter.org](http://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 fair housing, equal employment, public accommodations, public education, asylum and refugee rights, and disability rights. For more information about the Committee, see [www.washlaw.org](http://www.washlaw.org). The Committee can be reached at 202.319.1000.

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