



WASHINGTON LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND URBAN AFFAIRS

For Immediate Release

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Equal Rights Center and Dittmar Company Bring Accessible Housing to Northern Virginia

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 2, 2009 – The Equal Rights Center (ERC), a national civil rights organization, and Dittmar Company, a Vienna, Virginia based apartment developer, have reached a wide-ranging agreement to make more than 1,100 apartment units in the Rosslyn-Ballston Metro corridor accessible to people with disabilities.

“This agreement is a tremendous example of how housing developers can work with the ERC to be proactive in addressing accessibility issues without resorting to litigation, and make real changes in the community,” said Don Kahl, Executive Director of the ERC. “Dittmar’s willingness to invest its time, effort and resources to making its apartments more accessible, demonstrates its commitment to both the disability community and to Northern Virginia as a whole.”

Under the federal Fair Housing Act (FHA), apartment and condominium properties having four or more units completed after March 13, 1991, are required to have certain minimum accessibility features. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) adds additional accessibility requirements for these properties.

In 2007, the ERC found that some Dittmar properties were not accessible to people with disabilities and immediately began working with Dittmar to address accessibility concerns. “We hope that more developers will follow Dittmar’s lead and take a proactive approach to addressing accessibility issues, without the need for protracted and expensive enforcement litigation,” Kahl said.

As part of their agreement, Dittmar will also work with the ERC to develop a fair housing training program, include accessibility-related advertising in its marketing materials, and will be an active participant in the web-based National Accessible Apartment Clearinghouse—a searchable, national database of accessible apartments.

In reaching its agreement with Dittmar, the ERC was represented by the Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights & Urban Affairs and the Washington law firm of Gilbert, Oshinsky, LLP.

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“The Fair Housing Act’s accessibility provisions ensure equal housing opportunities are provided to the millions of Americans with disabilities. By working with the ERC, Dittmar has shown an exemplary commitment to ensuring equal access to housing for people with disabilities and actively promoting fair housing through affirmative advertising,” said Mary Hahn, Fair Housing Project Director at the Washington Lawyers’ Committee.

As part of its Fair Housing and Disability Rights Programs, the ERC has, in the last four years alone, worked with both large and small housing developers to retrofit more than 20,000 apartment and condominium units across the country to make them accessible for people with disabilities.

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