

Condo project lawsuit settled

By **KEN GOZE**

kgoze@pioneerlocal.com

One of Wilmette's lakefront high-rise condominium developments will have to convert formally to senior housing and pay out \$28,000 to settle a 3-year-old fair housing complaint.

Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs today announced terms of the settlement that the organization reached late last year with 1630 Sheridan Road Corp., a 104-unit cooperative in Wilmette along Lake Michigan.

The complaint, filed in 2006 by Interfaith, stemmed from reports that an owner was blocked from selling a unit to a family with young children under a cooperative rule stating the community was "not suitable for children under 18 years of age." Because the

building had not been designated legally as senior housing, the no-children rule was in violation of state and federal fair housing laws, Interfaith officials said. The complaint was referred to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and then the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

In the settlement agreement, building officials admitted no violation of the laws, but agreed to get the proper HUD exemptions that allow housing for residents 55 and older. The building cooperative also agreed to ongoing monitoring, fair housing education for directors and management company officials, and a payment of \$20,000 to the John Marshall Fair Housing Legal Clinic, which represented Interfaith. A separate state fine of \$8,000 also will be paid by

the building corporation.

"This case should send a message to all homeowners associations that discrimination against families with children is absolutely prohibited without an explicit HUD exemption. Moreover, many of these lakefront buildings and other suburban developments have a reputation for exclusivity to the point that families do not even think to apply. All housing developments need to make an affirmative effort to project themselves as welcoming to all," said Gail Schechter, Executive Director of the Interfaith Housing Center.

Kevin Brown, an attorney for 1630 Sheridan, declined to comment, saying only that an agreement had been reached to the satisfaction of both parties.

Comment: pioneerlocal.com