



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Over \$2.2 Million to Resolve Fair Housing Accessibility Case in Manhattan

In 2006, the Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc. (FHJC) conducted a testing investigation to determine whether new multi-family rental developments in Manhattan were being designed and constructed in compliance with the accessibility requirements of the federal Fair Housing Act (FHA). The FHJC investigation, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), found non-compliance with the design and construction provisions of the FHA. The testing identified barriers which posed significant challenges to people with disabilities who use wheelchairs. The FHJC forwarded the results of its testing, including information about Avalon Chrystie Place apartments, to the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York (U.S. Attorney's Office). In 2008, the U.S. Attorney's Office filed a lawsuit which alleged that developers and architects of Avalon Chrystie Place and six other Avalon Bay Communities in New York City had failed to design and construct their buildings in compliance with the accessibility requirements of the FHA.

Yesterday, the U.S. Attorney's Office announced a resolution to the lawsuit. The consent decree covers 2,557 Avalon apartment units and provides:

1). \$2,045,600 to compensate victims (i.e., any person who was harmed by the lack of accessible features, discouraged from living in the apartments because of the lack of accessible features, who personally paid to make an apartment accessible to persons with disabilities, or who was otherwise discriminated against on the basis of disability based on the design and construction property and apartment flaws);

2). a civil penalty of \$90,000; and,

3). an Accessibility Project Fund of \$72,000 to increase the accessibility of apartment kitchens.

Altogether, the settlement is worth over \$2.2 million and specifically requires that the relevant apartments and common areas be retrofitted so people with disabilities can access, use and enjoy these rental housing opportunities.

Under the consent decree, the \$2,045,600 victim fund is available to any person who was harmed by the lack of accessible features at any of the following New York City Avalon buildings:

Avalon Chrystie Place
Avalon Bowery Place I
Avalon Bowery Place II
Avalon Riverview
Avalon Riverview North
Avalon Fort Greene
Avalon Morningside Park

Anyone who believes that he/she may be entitled to receive monetary relief from the victim fund is encouraged to contact the:

Chief of the Civil Rights Unit
U.S. Attorney's Office
86 Chambers Street, Third Floor
New York, NY 10007
Civil Rights Complaint Line at (212) 637-2987
TDD line: (212) 637-0039

The FHJC applauds the US Attorney's Office for bringing this case to a successful resolution that expands the rental housing opportunities available to people with disabilities in New York City. Susan M. Kurien, FHJC Executive Director commented, "We are pleased that we were able to assist the U.S. Attorney's Office by identifying barriers that continue to restrict access to rental housing opportunities by persons with disabilities." Ms. Kurien added, "Since part of the mission of the FHJC is to promote open, accessible, and inclusive communities, we will continue to work with local, state, and federal officials to ensure that fair housing accessibility requirements are enforced."

The mission of the FHJC is to challenge systemic housing discrimination, promote open and inclusive communities, and strengthen fair housing enforcement. The FHJC assists individuals who encounter illegal housing discrimination by providing counseling on fair housing rights, investigative assistance (including testing), and referrals to administrative agencies and cooperating attorneys. Individuals who encounter illegal housing discrimination are encouraged to call the FHJC at (212) 400-8201.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Susan M. Kurien, Executive Director
Fair Housing Justice Center, Inc.
(212) 400-8201