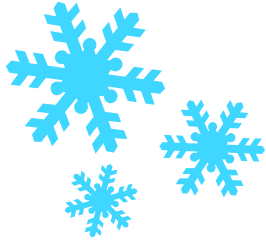


Winter 2011



FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

The Path to Cultivating Sustainable & Livable Communities

Fair Housing Center Plans Its 24th Annual Event for April 28, 2011

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan is very pleased to announce that Department of U.S. Housing & Urban Development's Deputy Secretary, Ron Sims, will be the keynote speaker for the 24th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series on **Thursday, April 28, 2011** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The theme for the event is "*Fair Housing: The Path to Cultivating Sustainable & Livable Communities.*" The FHCWM will again offer three concurrent morning workshops

access to opportunity; energy use and climate change; and public health and environmental impact.

Deputy Secretary Sims is responsible for managing HUD's day-to-day operations. He previously served as the Executive for King County, Washington. Mr. Sims was nationally recognized for his work on transportation, homelessness, climate change, health care reform, urban development and affordable housing. One of the hallmarks of his administration was the integration of environmental, social equity and public health policies that produced groundbreaking work on climate change, health care reform, affordable housing, mass transit, environmental protection, land use, and equity and social justice.

The FHCWM is planning three comprehensive and timely workshops that highlight the critical role fair housing plays in developing Sustainable Communities. Therefore, the FHCWM raises these questions for dialogue in the morning workshops.

The first workshop, **How Do We Best 'Affirmatively Further Fair Housing' to Cultivate Sustainable Communities?**, will provide practical guidance and best practices on meeting the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing under law as well as offer the chance for dialogue to develop creative approaches and opportunities to not only meet, but exceed the obligation. This workshop will be anchored by a presentation from HUD's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Enforcement & Programs Sara Pratt; she will be joined by Connie Bohatch, Managing Director of Community Services for the Grand Rapids Community Development Department. The second workshop, **How Do We Increase Our Environmental Quality While Ensuring Housing Access**

for All?, will discuss the dynamic between housing and environmental justice issues. The workshop will cover a variety of angles, including the environmental and fair housing implications of where housing is located as well as the relationship between housing and access to environmental resources. Nationally renowned fair housing attorney Steve Dane, of Relman, Dane & Colfax, will join the panel. The third workshop, **How Do We Integrate Housing & Transportation Decisions to Create Livable Communities?**, will explore the necessity to provide increased transportation (including complete streets, sidewalks and curb cuts, public transportation, and other alternatives) which removes existing barriers,

promotes community mobility and enhances access to vital resources, such as

schools and work, inherently connected to housing choice. This workshop offers an important opportunity for dialogue about

improving community livability in light of our aging population and infrastructure.

This workshop is made possible through the support of the Kent County Senior Millage.

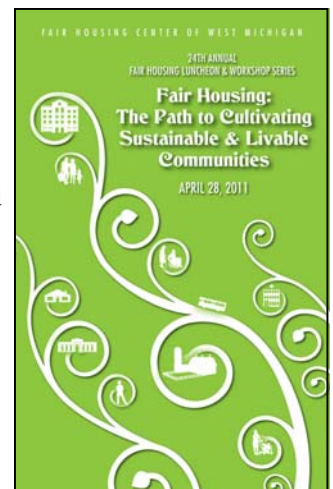


at 8:45 a.m. until 11:45 a.m. The Luncheon begins promptly at 12:00 p.m.

Deputy Secretary Sims will speak about the principles of the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which focuses on

improving regional planning efforts that integrate housing and transportation decisions, and increase the capacity to improve land use and zoning, through a fair housing lens. The Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program is providing funds to support metropolitan and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: economic competitiveness and revitalization; social equity, inclusion, and

Kent County Senior Millage



...FHCWM Notes & News...

Changes in Domestic Violence and Sexual Orientation Protections

- ◆ Governor Granholm approved Act No. 199, amending the Landlord-Tenant Act of 1972, which was passed to regulate relationships between landlords and tenants relative to rental agreements for rental units. The amendment (Section 1b) states in part that “a tenant who has a reasonable apprehension of present danger to the tenant or his/her child from domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking while that person is a tenant shall be released from his or her rental payment obligation” in accordance with the requirements outlined under the amendment. The tenant must submit written notice of their intent to seek a release and written documentation related to the reasonable apprehension of present danger; this requirement can be satisfied by providing 1 or more of the following: a valid personal protection order, probation/conditional release/parole order, written police report or a report verified by a qualified third party utilizing language provided. It also provides additional guidance as to forwarding address information, multiple tenants on the lease, etc. It applies to any lease entered, renewed or renegotiated after October 5, 2010. This document is available on our website: www.fhcwm.org.
- ◆ HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan announced new, stronger affordable housing regulations that protect victims of domestic abuse. “This rule recognizes the need to protect victims of domestic abuse from being evicted just because they were victimized. No one should be afraid of losing their home if they report abuse” said Donovan. The final regulatory requirements can be read under the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)* at www.hud.gov. VAWA provides legal protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. These protections apply to families receiving or seeking to receive rental assistance under HUD’s public housing, Housing Choice Voucher and multi-family project-based Section 8 programs.
- ◆ The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Board of Directors approved a rule that bans REALTORS® from denying equal professional services to a customer on the basis of sexual orientation. The board amended the Code of Ethics which addresses “duties to the public” to reflect this change as well as the Standard of Practice to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in any advertisements for selling or renting property. The Code already prohibited discrimination against customers on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin.

National Fair Housing News

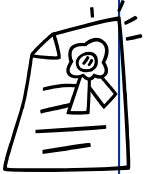
Washington, DC—The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development today announced that it has charged a King County, Washington, landlord with violating the Fair Housing Act. HUD contends that Summerhill Place LLC, the owners of Summerhill Apartments in Renton, WA, its management company, and on-site manager, engaged in a pattern of adverse treatment of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and families with children, in violation of the Fair Housing Act. HUD’s investigation found evidence that the on-site manager instructed her staff to show minority applicants apartments with less desirable amenities, such as worn carpet and older appliances, steered minority applicants away from the building in which she lived, and banned her assistant manager from speaking Spanish to Hispanic applicants. She also allegedly told an Asian American tenant to “go back to India if you can’t use the appliances properly.” To another Asian American tenant, she allegedly said, “For God’s sake, you come from a country with no running water and cook over an open flame.”

Local Fair Housing News

Complaint #10-075 - The FHCWM received a complaint from a client alleging source of income discrimination against an apartment complex located within the City of Grand Rapids. In particular, the client alleged that she had been denied access to a rental special in the amount of one month’s rent, or \$599.00, because she received rental assistance from a local community agency. The Fair Housing Ordinance of the City of Grand Rapids prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of source of income, including the denial of a special. As such, the FHCWM conducted matched pair testing which supported the client’s allegation, and subsequently contacted the management company to discuss fair housing laws and source of income protection afforded by the City of Grand Rapids. The FHCWM was later notified by the client that the management company had applied the rental special to her account, which increased not only her financial security but also her access to equal opportunity.

2011 Fair Housing Awards: Nominations Needed

It’s that time of year again! Please consider submitting an individual or organization for a Fair Housing Award to be presented at the April 28th luncheon. Selection is based upon a demonstrated commitment to fair housing. Please fill out the enclosed nomination form and return it to the FHCWM by **March 21, 2011**. You may submit more than one. Thank you to all of you who nominated such worthy community members in 2010 for the Fair Housing Award. We *really* value your input!



**Fair Housing Center
of West Michigan**
20 Hall Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
T: (616) 451-2980 or 1-866-389-FAIR
F: (616) 451-2657

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Thank You 2010 FHCWM Members

THANK YOU SO MUCH to all of our 2010 members! Because of your generous support throughout the year, we exceeded our 2010 Membership Goal of \$9,000 by raising \$13,069 for FHCWM programs! These funds are critical to our education and outreach efforts.

Special Thanks to Our:

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- Chemical Bank
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- Faith Jewelry Designs by Veronica LLC
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...FHCWM News & Events...

FHCWM Board Update

The FHCWM would like to thank Board Member **Jim Wilson** for his many years of board service. Jim joined the board in 2002 and provided an important perspective as a housing provider. Jim is a recipient of the 2008 Fair Housing Advocate Award for his work incorporating fair housing into the rental property management industry and for his national advocacy for the housing voucher program. *Thank you, Jim!*

The FHCWM would also like to thank Lakeshore Advisory Board Member **Jorge Gonzalez** for his many years of service and advocacy for fair housing along the lakeshore. *Thank you, Jorge!*

Fair Housing Book Club

Upcoming discussions:

March 15th in Holland on Fordlandia: The Rise & Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City by Greg Grandin

March 22nd in Grand Rapids on Fordlandia: The Rise & Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City by Greg Grandin

All meetings begin at 11:45 am.

Locations: Holland at Disability Network (421 Century Lane); Grand Rapids at FHCWM (20 Hall SE).

Bring a lunch & join us!

Fair Housing Trainings

The Fair Housing Center offers fair housing trainings, including Fair Housing & Advertising, Fair Housing Training for Rental Professionals and Fair Lending sessions. Costs vary depending on the type of training. Each training is 3 hours and includes a comprehensive packet of reference materials.

Some sessions are held at the FHCWM office; we can also come to your location. Call Liz Keegan at (616) 451-2980 to learn more or register.

Check our website home page for upcoming dates: www.fhcwm.org.

The FHCWM hosts two **tester trainings** each month. Testers are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a stipend in return for their time and services. In order to accommodate differing schedules, one training will take place during business hours while the other will be held in the evening. For the specific training dates, to register, or any other questions contact Michelle Charette at (616) 451-2980.

www.fhcwm.org
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