

HUD ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT WITH RIDGELAND, MISSISSIPPI TO SETTLE DISCRIMINATORY ZONING COMPLAINT

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced today an agreement with Ridgeland, Mississippi to resolve complaints the city violated the Fair Housing Act when it passed and enforced a zoning ordinance that HUD claimed was motivated by racial animus and created a discriminatory effect on the city’s African American residents. [Read the agreement.](#)

The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful for cities and municipalities to enact housing ordinances that discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability.

“While zoning is the primary responsibility of local government, it cannot be used as a vehicle for discriminating against minority families through a campaign of depopulation,” said Gustavo Velasquez, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. “Everyone, regardless of their race, should have the opportunity to live where they choose and HUD will continue to take appropriate action when that right is violated.”

In December of 2015, HUD filed a fair housing complaint against the city after receiving reports that a number of apartment complexes faced possible demolition after the city instituted a new zoning requirement that lowered the allowable density. Specifically, HUD complained the city’s new zoning ordinance called for several of the apartment complexes with the highest minority populations to be amortized, putting more than 1,400 units at risk of being replaced with mixed-use developments. HUD also alleged that other majority minority complexes were subjected to lower density restrictions, which could have resulted in a loss of hundreds of additional apartment units.

Under the Conciliation Agreement, the city of Ridgeland agrees to amend the 2014 Ordinance so that multifamily properties are treated as they were prior to the Ordinance when it comes to use and density; provide notice to property managers and/or owners of multifamily properties in advance of any public hearings contemplating changes to existing zoning, land use, and occupancy policies; and

process all zoning, land use, building and occupancy approvals and permits in good faith and in a timely manner. The city also agreed to submit to HUD a proposed Affordable and Fair Housing Marketing Plan which encourages the development of mixed income communities and provides tangible steps for conducting outreach and engaging the residents of Southeastern Ridgeland in the community planning process.

Any person who believes he or she has experienced discrimination may file a complaint by contacting HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TTY). Housing discrimination complaints may also be filed by going to www.hud.gov/fairhousing, or by downloading HUD's free housing discrimination mobile application, which can be accessed through Apple and Android devices.

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HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all.