



September 29, 2021

GENERAL NEWS

DOJ Settles Disability Discrimination Suit against Construction Company and Related Entities in NC

In a [press release](#) yesterday, the Department of Justice ([DOJ](#)) announced that it has reached an agreement to resolve a lawsuit alleging that a construction company and several related entities violated the [Fair Housing Act](#) and the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) by failing to build 38 multifamily housing complexes in North Carolina with the required accessible features for people with disabilities. According to the announcement, many of the complexes at issue were built with financial assistance from the federal government's low-income housing tax credit program.

Under the settlement, which must be approved by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, defendants will pay all costs related to the retrofits, \$225,000 into a settlement fund to compensate individuals harmed by the inaccessible housing and a civil penalty of \$50,000 to the government. The defendants will, among other things, replace steeply sloped walkways so residents can reach mailboxes and entrances to the properties, remove obstacles from pedestrian pathways, install lever handles on doors, and widen doorways to provide sufficient space for individuals who use wheelchairs.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The Act also requires housing built after March 1991 to contain accessible features for persons with disabilities. Failure to meet these standards it is considered unlawful discrimination. Likewise, the ADA protects individuals with disabilities from discrimination in public accommodations.

GENERAL NEWS

Student Design and Planning Competition Is Now Open

HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research ([PD&R](#)) announced that it has opened registration for the 2022 [Innovation in Affordable Housing \(IAH\) Student Design and Planning Competition](#). The IAH competition has been designed to replicate a real-life approach. Multi-disciplinary teams of graduate students in architecture, planning and policy, finance, and other areas will be asked to address social, economic, and environmental issues in response to a specific housing problem developed by an actual public housing agency (PHA).

After the submission of initial applications, a jury of five industry subject matter experts will select four finalist teams to participate in a visit to the public housing authority's site. The students will then have several weeks to develop and refine their proposals before the final presentation in April at HUD Headquarters in Washington, DC. The deadline for teams to [submit](#) their intent to participate is **October 25, 2021**.

On August 26, 2021, HUD hosted an [informational webinar](#) for PHAs interested in partnering with HUD for the 2022 IAH competition. Click [here](#) to download a PHA application.



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