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LOW INCOME & TENANTS WITH DISABILITIES AT THE ALEXANDRIA HOTEL WIN MAJOR CHANGES IN LAWSUIT SETTLEMENT

(Los Angeles) (February 12, 2009)—Low-income tenants, and those with disabilities at the century-old Alexandria Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, who suffered from unlawful displacement, shutoffs of heat, water and elevator service, have negotiated a broad-sweeping case settlement in their lawsuit filed in December, 2007.

Defendants in the lawsuit included Alexandria Housing Partners (AHP), Logan Property Management, the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) and the City of Los Angeles. The plaintiffs are six current and four former residents of the Alexandria Hotel, and one organizational plaintiff, CANGRESS (LA CAN), a California non-profit corporation serving low-income and homeless residents in the Skid Row area of downtown Los Angeles.

On December 20, 2007, McDermott Will & Emery LLP, the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, the Disability Rights Legal Center, and the Western Center on Law and Poverty filed the original lawsuit, *Woods, et al. v. Alexandria Housing Partners, L.P., et al.*, United States District Court of the Central District of California Case No. CV07-08262 MMM (JWJx). The lawsuit sought to redress violations of the tenants' rights, which occurred during the rehabilitation of the Alexandria Hotel. These included gross violations of civil rights, disability discrimination, community redevelopment, relocation, and housing condition laws. The plaintiffs then filed a Second Amended Complaint on or about July 31, 2008.

"This settlement is a great victory for all Alexandria Hotel tenants who were subjected to cruel and illegal practices, as well as being ignored and discredited by City officials at many levels. This victory illustrates what is possible when dedicated and organized tenants, public interest and pro bono lawyers and community-based organizations join forces for justice," said Becky Dennison, co-director of the Los Angeles Community Action Network, the organizational plaintiff.

Settlement Details

Defendants CRA/LA and City of Los Angeles:

- 1) **Strengthen CRA/LA Policies:** The lawsuit settlement includes strengthening several CRA/LA policies to avoid similar future problems, including a new In-Place Rehabilitation Policy, stronger disability and reasonable accommodations policies; and affirmative marketing requirements.
- 2) **Housing Referral:** Eligible former tenants who lived at the Alexandria for at least 90 days prior to August 10, 2006, but whose residency ended subsequent to August 10, 2006, will receive a housing referral by the CRA/LA to a unit that is available for residential occupancy at the time the referral is provided. The unit must be equivalent in size and amenities to the previously rented hotel unit; provide accommodations for disabilities required by law; and made available at an "Affordable Rent" as required by California Community Redevelopment Law.
- 3) **Settlement Fund:** CRA/LA and the City of Los Angeles must establish a Settlement Fund of \$400,000 for payments to eligible former tenants, and that additional efforts must be made by the CRA/LA and the City to find former tenants who were evicted from the Alexandria since AHP purchased the property, and to offer these tenants the ability to apply for settlement payments and a housing referral.

Defendants AHP and LPM:

- 1) **Former Tenants:** Defendants must give first priority to displaced, eligible former tenants.
- 2) **Policies:** Defendants must abide by stronger disability-related and affirmative marketing requirements. They must also meet habitability standards and provide mitigation measures should utilities fail at the Alexandria Hotel.
- 3) **Damages and Fees:** the defendants must pay \$550,000 damages and attorney fees to plaintiffs. They are also subject to monitoring requirements, with the court maintaining jurisdiction over the case for three years.

Background

The Alexandria Hotel, a 102-year-old residential hotel located at 501 South Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles, was designed by famed architect John Parkinson, who also designed the Los Angeles City Hall, Union Station and the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. The hotel became a community redevelopment project in August of 2006. With considerable public support from local and state elected officials Alexandria Housing Partners (AHP) received community redevelopment funds to rehabilitate the Alexandria to continue its use as affordable housing. Since that date, more than 100 tenants, many who have been longtime residents were displaced from the hotel.

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