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Columbus City Officials Announce Settlement of Largest Public Nuisance Lawsuit in City's History

*After months of negotiations and good-faith progress in addressing code violations,
Illinois-based property owner comes to agreement with City of Columbus*

COLUMBUS—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein and Department of Development Director Steve Schoeny announced today that the City of Columbus is entering into a settlement agreement with AMG Realty Group, owner of three large multi-building apartment complexes in the city and defendant in the [largest public nuisance lawsuit on record in the City of Columbus](#). The agreed court order, which was officially filed in the Franklin County Environmental Court, imposes a series of strict guidelines upon AMG.

The City Attorney's original complaint, which was filed in September, cited AMG for an "extensive history of continued violations" of city housing, nuisance abatement, health, sanitation, and safety codes. The complaint, and now the current settlement, covers all 802 units located in the Mayfair Apartments, Hartford on the Lake, and Fitzroy Apartments owned by AMG.

The suit is the result of AMG being placed on code enforcement's landlord list of the top code violators. Inspectors compile information using database information based on the number of interior and exterior violations and civil and criminal court cases filed on properties.

"Our settlement with AMG, which now has the full force of a court order, is a comprehensive and very specific set of measures that should greatly improve the living conditions for the residents of these buildings," said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. "We appreciate AMG and their counsel for working with us in good faith to come up with an equitable solution that focuses on what really matters, and that's the quality of life of their tenants."

Along with resolving all outstanding code violation orders in a timely manner, the joint agreement ensures that the premises of the three apartment complexes will continue to be maintained in compliance with "any and all applicable Columbus City Codes." AMG also has agreed to pay the city a \$50,000 administrative fine. Mayor Ginther's administration plans to use these dollars toward the Eviction Prevention program.

The terms and conditions that AMG is required to follow, include:

- Adhering to a compliance schedule to resolve additional notices of violation that were issued at the premises after the city's lawsuit was filed in September.
- Conducting proactive maintenance assessments for pest control and all plumbing systems at the premises; all related actions must be done as soon as is practicable and documentation must be provided to the city within 14 days.
- Providing quarterly maintenance questionnaires to all tenants.
- Maintaining onsite offices at all three apartment complex locations weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Translation services, if necessary, also must be provided.
- Employing a minimum number of 15 maintenance staff who are assigned to the three locations. An emergency/after-hours maintenance contact person also must be provided to city code enforcement officials.
- Retaining "replacement reserves" for maintenance expenses of not less than \$450 per unit, per year.
- Developing and adopting maintenance tracking procedures. These measures include maintenance request forms submitted by paper, email, text or phone; creating tracking numbers; and defining strict time frames to respond and remedy maintenance requests.
- Following clearly defined refuse collection guidelines.
- Ensuring that daily litter-pickup of the entire grounds takes place at all three locations.
- Hiring private security guards who must be posted at the premises at all three locations. A primary security contact also must be designated for the Columbus Division of Police.

The City Attorney's client in this case was the Columbus Department of Development, which oversees code enforcement and was responsible for issuing more than 150 violations against AMG. Development officials, including Director Steve Schoeny, worked extensively to try to bring the properties into compliance before having to turn to city attorneys to file the lawsuit in September. They also were involved in the settlement negotiations.

"Our goal is always compliance. When we are unable to get that, we have to use other methods to get a property owner's attention," said Development Director Steve Schoeny. "In this case, the process worked and we are now looking forward, and hope this ensures this property owner will continue to comply with orders and provide decent, safe and sanitary housing for his tenants."

A copy of the [agreed court](#) order is available online.

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