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### **DUPAGE REAL ESTATE FIRM AND FORMER AGENT TO PAY \$120,000 TO SETTLE FAIR HOUSING DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT**

CHICAGO – A DuPage County real estate firm and one of its former real estate agents have agreed to pay \$120,000 to a national fair housing organization to settle allegations that they illegally steered prospective home buyers toward and away from certain neighborhoods based on race and national origin, officials of the United State’s Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Illinois and the Justice Department announced today. The agreement resolves allegations contained in a civil lawsuit filed last year in Federal Court that the firm, RE/MAX East-West, located in Elmhurst, and its former agent, John DeJohn, had steered an Hispanic tester toward homes in predominantly African-American or Hispanic neighborhoods, but had encouraged a similarly situated white tester to look at listings in predominantly white neighborhoods.

The settlement with S&W Elmhurst, LLC, which does business as RE/MAX East-West, and DeJohn requires the defendants to pay \$120,000 to the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA). It also requires RE/MAX East-West to hire a qualified organization to provide fair housing training to its agents and to maintain records and submit periodic reports to the United States. The settlement also requires DeJohn, who is no longer working as a realtor and whose Illinois license expires in April, to comply with similar training and reporting requirements if he decides to become a real

estate agent again in Illinois or any other state. The settlement was approved yesterday by U.S. District Judge Ruben Castillo. Both defendants agreed to settlement without admitting liability.

“Real estate firms and their agents who steer buyers to different neighborhoods based on race or nationality have violated the Fair Housing Act, and we will enforce the law to ensure that people may purchase homes where they choose and are free from unlawful discrimination,” said Patrick Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

“Unlawful steering by real estate agents frustrates the rights of people to make fully informed housing choices and perpetuates segregated housing patterns,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Loretta King of the Civil Rights Division. “We appreciate the efforts of NFHA and of investigators at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who have helped shine a light on this problem. We will continue to vigorously pursue such discrimination.”

The lawsuit originated from a complaint filed with HUD by the National Fair Housing Alliance, which conducted fair housing testing of RE/MAX East-West in 2004 and 2005 and revealed the alleged steering of diverse testers to and from certain neighborhoods. Both an Hispanic tester and a white tester had contacted DeJohn about the same advertised listing. DeJohn allegedly told the white tester that it did not matter to DeJohn if the buyer was a bigot, and that the white tester should let him know if he did not like an area. DeJohn told the white tester that while DeJohn could not be a bigot, the white tester could. After an investigation, HUD found reasonable cause to believe that unlawful discrimination had occurred and referred the matter to the Justice Department, which filed the lawsuit last July.

The Government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joan Laser and the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division.

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