



MEDIA RELEASE

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Tentative Agreement Reached Between City and Landlord
*City of Oakland Settles Lawsuit to Improve Housing Conditions
for Hundreds in Oakland*

(Oakland, CA) – Today, Council President Ignacio De la Fuente and Oakland City Attorney John Russo announced that the City of Oakland has reached a tentative settlement agreement on a lawsuit for housing code violations and unfair business practices against an Oakland property owner, Phuong Pham. The Public Nuisance Hearing scheduled for Monday, April 18th at 7 PM has been put on hold pending finalization of the agreement.

The Neighborhood Law Corps (NLC), a team of community-directed lawyers in the City Attorney's office, first filed suit against Pham in October 2004. The city's suit would have resulted in civil penalties and fines costing millions of dollars. The City compromised collecting on the penalties and fines in order to allow Pham sufficient funds to make repairs.

Ms. Pham owns eighteen buildings with a total of ninety-four units. Many of Pham's tenants are recent Latino and Southeast Asian immigrants with limited-English skills.

The tentative agreement, with minor details still to be finalized, requires Pham to hire an independent inspection firm to evaluate all eighteen buildings and units; to abide by a Compliance Plan for repairs with the City of Oakland Building Services Division; posting a bond to ensure the repairs are done adequately; and to pay the city an undisclosed amount in attorney's fees, fines, and penalties.

"The real winners in this settlement are the tenants," said Council President De la Fuente. "They've been living in sub-standard conditions for far too long. I'm pleased that Ms. Pham decided to do the right thing."

"This should also send a sobering message to all negligent landlords in Oakland," continued De la Fuente. "I especially want to thank the city staff who worked so diligently on this case, especially Laura Blair, NLC attorney, James Hodgkins, Supervising Attorney of the NLC, and Arturo Sanchez, Public Nuisance Case Manager of the City Administrator's Office."

"The Neighborhood Law Corps has worked diligently on this case for more than two years," said Oakland City Attorney John Russo. "Thanks to the participation of the neighbors, code enforcement staff, and Councilmember De La Fuente's office, we were able to turn these properties around."

Pham was accused of refusing to make repairs and ignoring scores of legitimate complaints. Units in five buildings were uninhabitable due to nonfunctioning heaters, plumbing leaks that caused walls, floors and ceilings to deteriorate and collapse, and infestations of mold, rats, mice and cockroaches.