



Apartment owners, Brooklyn Center reach settlement

The city has long had a contentious relationship with Center Pointe, which has had a slew of violations and police calls.

By **LORA PABST**, Star Tribune

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City officials have reached a settlement with Hyder Jaweed and Asgher Ali, the brothers who own Center Pointe through a limited-liability company. The deal resolves criminal charges against the owners, a pending rental license revocation and a lawsuit against the city. Center Pointe's contentious relationship with the city has revolved around hundreds of city housing and safety violations recorded over the past few years and high numbers of police calls. The owners insisted in the suit that the city was targeting them "because of the Jaweed's' national origin and as retaliation for [the Jaweed's] aiding Black, African American and other minority tenants." Instead of spending taxpayer money on a suit, the city decided to settle with the owners, which they hope will result in apartments that meet all city codes. "It's kind

of sad that the city has to go to this much effort to compel compliance with our ordinances, but our overall goal is to provide safe housing," said Mayor Tim Willson. The attorney for the brothers could not be reached. Many provisions in the agreement simply require compliance with city housing ordinances -- secured exterior doors and windows, working fire alarms, and a list of all occupants. But the city is taking additional steps to make sure the complex stays adequately maintained. Weekly inspection records must be turned into the Police Department, a log of tenant criminal behavior must be kept, the owners must keep a \$10,000 savings account for maintenance, and the city will be able to do unscheduled inspections if tenants request them. The rental license revocation could be reinstated if the agreement, which is in place until Jan. 15, 2010, is broken. "If they do breach the settlement, we feel we have a much stronger case going back into the court system," Willson said. While both sides said they think the settlement will resolve many of the longstanding problems at the apartments, Willson said the Police Department is still projecting about 800 police calls to the complex this year, and noted many violations that need to be corrected in a short time. As part of the deal, the city will build a 6-foot black steel picket fence on the property by

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June 1 that the Center Pointe owners will pay for through assessments. Eric Hauge, an organizer for the nonprofit tenant advocacy organization HOME Line, has worked with several Center Pointe residents. He said the biggest concern for many tenants, especially for women and families, is security. "A number of the female tenants were scared to go out in the common space because there would be people passed out or men who didn't live there just wandering around," Hauge said. The tenants are reserving judgment on the deal until they see progress, he said. "It overall looks good on paper, but with the tenants we've been working with, they don't really believe it," he said. Lora Pabst • 612-673-4628

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