



## SSHC Fair Housing Enforcement Advocates for Eastcourt Village Tenants

SSHC's Fair Housing Enforcement Program staff provided support and advocacy for tenants living at Eastcourt Village, a 13-story senior subsidized apartment building in Kankakee, Illinois that also accepts housing choice vouchers. Around the beginning of 2022, Eastcourt Village tenants began meeting monthly to discuss maintenance and safety issues that had become intolerable under the property's ownership and management, JPC/Apex. SSHC became aware of severe safety conditions at the property when the City of Kankakee staff contacted us in March 2022 regarding elevator maintenance issues affecting elderly and disabled residents who were forced to contact the City's first responders to get transported from upper floors of the building to receive healthcare.

For much of 2022, SSHC has been an active participant with a coalition of organizations, including the Eastcourt Village Tenants' Association, Tenants Education Network, Options Center for Independent Living, and the Shriver Center for Poverty Law, that have come together to improve living conditions for the building's many residents. SSHC has previously investigated and assisted disabled residents of Eastcourt Village in enforcing their federal and state fair housing rights.

On September 6, 2022, Fannie Mae, JPC/Apex's lender for Eastcourt Village, filed an emergency motion for appointment of receiver. On October 5, 2022, the court granted the receivership and appointed Trigild, Inc., a firm with substantial relevant national experience, as the property's receiver.

Since the court-appointed Trigild as the property's receiver, conditions have steadily improved for residents. Trigild has hired multiple former Eastcourt Village employees and a current Eastcourt Village tenant to work on-site. The staff Trigild hired have significantly improved living conditions at the property in a short time. Notably, they have responded quickly to elevator maintenance issues and fixed the garbage chute, which had become clogged and inoperable in the summer of 2022 under JPC/Apex's ownership. They have also ordered a new door and frame for the west door, which had become a serious security concern because the lock was broken. Additionally, Trigild's pest control program has already improved the gnat problem at the building. JPC/Apex failed to address these health and safety issues when it had control of the building, and Trigild has made substantial progress in just a few months.

The next step will be for the court to formally remove JPC/Apex as owner and facilitate the sale of the building to a reputable owner. None of the progress made at Eastcourt Village would be possible without the tenants' own organizing, a powerful example of the power of unified voices to impact change. SSHC is honored to be included in this inspiring project!