

ORDINANCE NO. 87-38

FAIR HOUSING ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE DECLARING IT TO BE THE POLICY OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA, TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING BASED UPON RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, ANCESTRY, SEX, PLACE OF BIRTH, PHYSICAL HANDICAP, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; SPECIFYING EXEMPTIONS; SPECIFYING UNLAWFUL ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE SALE OR RENTAL OF HOUSING; SPECIFYING UNLAWFUL ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION OF BROKERAGE SERVICE; PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING FOR PROCEDURES FOR INITIATING AND ACTING UPON COMPLAINTS; PROVIDING FOR HEARINGS; PROVIDING FOR OTHER REMEDIES; PROVIDING PROCEDURES FOR FILING REPORTS WITH THE REAL ESTATE COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA; REPEALING CONFLICT ORDINANCES; AND PROVIDING FOR LIMITED INVALIDATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION I - DECLARATION OF POLICY

It is hereby declared to be the policy of Nassau County, Florida, in the exercise of its police power for the public safety, public health, and general welfare, to assure equal opportunity to obtain adequate housing by all persons regardless of race, color, religion, ancestry, sex, place of birth, physical handicap, or national origin, and to that end, to eliminate discrimination in housing.

SECTION II - DEFINITIONS

When used herein:

- (A) "Board" - means the Board of County Commissioners, Nassau County, Florida.
- (B) "Dwelling" - means any building, structure or portion thereof which is occupied as, or designed or intended for occupancy as, a residence by one or more families, and any vacant land which is offered for sale or lease for the construction or location of any such building, structure, or portion thereof.

- (C) "Family" includes a single individual.
- (D) "Person" includes one or more individuals, corporations, partnerships, associations, labor organizations, legal representatives, mutual companies, joint-stock companies, trusts, unincorporated organizations, trustees, trustees in bankruptcy, receivers, and fiduciaries.
- (E) "To Rent" includes to lease, to sublease, to let, and otherwise to grant for a consideration the right to occupy premises not owned by the occupant.
- (F) "Discriminatory Housing Practice" means an act that is unlawful under Section 4, 5, or 6 of this Ordinance.

SECTION III - EXEMPTIONS

(A) Nothing in Section 4 (other than Subsection (B)) shall apply to:

(1) Any single-family house sold or rented by an owner: PROVIDED, that such private individual owner does not own more than three such single-family houses at any one time; PROVIDED FURTHER, that in the case of the sale of any such single-family house by a private individual owner not residing in such house at the time of such sale or who was not the most recent resident of such house prior to such sale, the exemption granted by this Subsection shall apply only with respect to one such sale within any twenty-four (24) month period; PROVIDED FURTHER, that after the effective date of this Ordinance the sale or rental of any such single-family house shall be excepted from the application of this ordinance only if such house is sold or rented (A) without the use of any manner of sales or rental facilities or the sales or rental services of any real estate broker, agent, or salesman, or of such facilities or services of any person in the business of selling or renting dwellings, or of any employee or agent of any such broker, agent, salesman, or person and (B) without the publication, posting, or mailing, after notice, of any advertisement or written notice in violation of Section 4(C) of this title; but nothing in this

provision shall prohibit the use of attorneys, escrow agents, abstractors, title companies, and other such professional assistance as necessary to perfect or transfer the title, or

(2) rooms or units in dwellings containing living quarters occupied or intended to be occupied by no more than four (4) families living independently of each other, if the owner actually maintains and occupies one of such living quarters as his residence.

(B) For the purposes of Subsection (A), a person shall be deemed to be in the business of selling or renting dwellings if:

(1) he has, within the preceding twelve (12) months, participated as a principal in three (3) or more transactions involving the sale or rental of any dwelling of any interest therein, or

(2) he has, within the preceding twelve (12) months, participated as agent, other than in the sale of his personal residence in providing sales or rental facilities or sales or rental services in two (2) or more transactions involving the sale or rental of any dwelling or any interest therein, or

(3) he is the owner of any dwelling designated or intended for occupancy by, or occupied by five (5) or more families,

(C) Nothing in this Ordinance shall prohibit a religious organization, association, or society, or any non-profit institution or organization operated, supervised or controlled by or in conjunction with a religious organization, association, or society, from limiting the sale, rental, or occupancy of dwellings which it owns or operates for other than a commercial purpose to persons of the same religion, or from giving preference to such persons, unless membership in such religion is restricted on account of race, color, sex, or national origin. Nor shall anything in this Ordinance prohibit a private club not in fact open to the public, which as an incident to its primary purpose or purposes provide lodgings from which it owns or operates for other than a commercial purpose, from limiting the rental or occupancy of such lodgings to its members or from giving preference to its members.

SECTION IV - DISCRIMINATION IN THE SALE OR RENTAL OF HOUSING

As made applicable by Section 3 and except as exempted by Section 3(A) and 7, it shall be unlawful:

(A) To refuse to sell or rent after making of a bona fide offer, or to refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise make unavailable or deny a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

(B) To discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in provision of services or facilities in connection therewith, because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

(C) To make, print, or publish, or cause to be made printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitations, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination.

(D) To represent to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin that any dwelling is not available for inspection, sale, or rental when such dwelling is in fact so available.

(E) For profit, to induce or attempt to induce any person to sell or rent any dwelling by representatives regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person or persons of a particular race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

SECTION V - DISCRIMINATION IN THE FINANCING OF HOUSING

It shall be unlawful for any bank, building and loan association, insurance company or other corporation, association, firm or enterprise whose business consists in whole or in part in the making of commercial real estate loans, to deny a loan or other financial assistance to a person applying therefor for the purpose of purchasing, constructing, improving, repairing, or maintaining a dwelling, or to discriminate against him in the fixing of the amount, interest rate, duration, or other terms or

conditions of such loan or other financial assistance, because of the race, color, religion, sex, or national origin of such person or of any person associated with him in connection with such loans or other financial assistance, or of the present or prospective owners, lessees, tenants, or occupants of the dwelling or dwellings in relation to which such loan or other financial assistance is to be made or given:

PROVIDED, that nothing contained in this Section shall impair the scope or effectiveness of the exceptions, contained in Section 3.

SECTION VI - DISCRIMINATION IN THE PROVISION OF BROKERAGE SERVICE

It shall be unlawful to deny any person access to or membership or participation in any multiple-listing service, real estate brokers organization or other services, organizations, or facility relating to the business of selling or renting dwellings, or to discriminate against him in the terms or conditions of such access, membership, or participation, on account of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

SECTION VII - ADMINISTRATION

(A) The authority and responsibility for administering this Ordinance shall be with the Board.

(B) The Board may delegate its functions, duties, and powers to the Nassau County Zoning Board, including functions, duties, and powers with respect to investigating, conciliating, hearing, determining, ordering, certifying, reporting, or otherwise acting as to any work, business, or matter under this Ordinance.

(C) The Board or its appointed board shall:

(1) implement the provisions of this Ordinance and rules and regulations promulgated hereunder and all ordinances, codes, rules, and regulations pertaining to housing discrimination.

(2) receive, initiate, and investigate any and all complaints alleging violations of the Ordinance, and take appropriate action to eliminate, conciliate, prevent, and/or initiate prosecution of any such violations.

(3) provide assistance in all matters relating to equal housing opportunity.

(4) publish and disseminate public information and educational material relating to housing discrimination.

(5) enter into written agreements, as may be necessary to effectuate the purposes of this Ordinance, with federal, state, and county agencies involved in reducing housing discrimination.

(6) administer oaths and compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence before it by subpoenas issued by the Commission or its appointed board.

(7) take other information, educational, or persuasive action to implement the purposes of this Ordinance.

SECTION VIII - PROCEDURE

(A) Any person aggrieved by an unlawful practice prohibited by this Ordinance must file a written complaint with the Board or its appointed board within forty-five (45) days after the alleged unlawful practice occurs.

(B) Upon receipt of a complaint, the Commission or its appointed board shall serve the individual charged with a violation (hereafter referred to as the respondent), the complaint and a written resume setting forth the rights of the parties including, but not limited to, the right of the respondent to a hearing on the matter before adjudication by the Board or its appointed board.

(C) The Board or its appointed board shall immediately investigate the complaint. Within sixty (60) days from the date of receipt of the complaint, the Board or its appointed board shall establish written report with findings of fact.

(D) Copies of the Board or its appointed board's report shall be sent to the complainant and the respondent. Either may within ten (10) days after such service, request a hearing before the Board.

(E) When the complainant or the respondent request a hearing by the Board or its appointed board, or when the Board or its

appointed board itself determine that a hearing is desirable, the Board or its appointed board shall call and conduct such hearing in accordance with Section 9, below.

(F) The Board or its appointed board shall carry into execution the actions specified in its report, or, if a hearing is held, shall carry into execution the actions determined upon by the Board or its appointed board in the hearing.

(G) The Board or its appointed board in its review or its hearing may determine:

(1) That the complaint lacks ground upon which to base action for violation of this Ordinance, or

(2) That the complaint has been adequately dealt with by conciliation of the parties, or

(3) That the case warrants filing charges against the offending party in the appropriate court. In some cases both conciliation and adjudicative orders, or both adjudicative orders and initiation of court action may be indicated.

(H) If the Board or its appointed board issues an adjudicative order to correct, adjust, conciliate, prevent, or prohibit any unlawful act prohibited by the Ordinance, and the respondent refuses or fails to comply with or obey such adjudication, the Board or its appointed board shall forthwith request that the State Attorney file a complaint in the appropriate court. The Board or its appointed board shall, at all times, provide the complainant with full and timely information as to all the alternatives available to him or her under local, state, and federal law, including assistance to initiate judicial action if desired, under the circumstances.

(I) The provision of Rule 1.090, Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, shall govern the computation of any period of time prescribed by this Ordinance.

(J) All papers or pleadings required by the Ordinance to be served may be served by certified mail or in accordance with the provisions of Rule 1.080 (b), Florida Rules of Civil Procedure.

SECTION IX - HEARINGS BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

(A) When a hearing is required before the Board or its appointed board, as specified in Section 8(C) above, the Board or its appointed board shall schedule the hearings and serve upon all interested parties a notice of time and place of the hearing. The hearing shall be held promptly, but not less than fifteen (15) days after service of such notice and of the Board's or its appointed board's written report (Section 8(D) above).

(B) The parties, or their authorized counsel, may file such statements with the Board or its appointed board, prior to the hearing date, as they deem necessary in support of their positions. The parties may appear before the Board or its appointed board in person or by duly constituted representatives and may have the assistance of attorneys. The parties may present testimony and evidence, and the right to cross-examine witnesses shall be preserved. All testimony shall be given under oath or by affirmation. The Board or its appointed board shall not be bound by strict rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law or equity but due process shall be observed. The Board or its appointed board shall keep a full record of the hearing, which records shall be public and open to inspection by any person, and upon request by any principal party to the proceedings the Board or its appointed board shall furnish such party a copy of the hearing record at cost. The constitutional rights of the respondent not to incriminate himself shall be scrupulously observed.

(C) The Board or its appointed board shall make a finding of fact, and a determination of action to be taken (Section 8(G) above).

(D) The Board or its appointed board may issue subpoenas to compel access to or the production of appearance or premises, records, documents, individuals, and other evidence or possible source of evidence relative to the complaint at issue.

(E) Upon written application to the Board or its appointed board, a respondent shall be entitled to the issuance of a reasonable number of subpoenas by and in the name of the Board or

its appointed board to the extent and subject to the same limitations as subpoenas issued by the Board or its appointed board itself. Subpoenas issued at the request of a respondent shall show on their face the name and address of such respondent and shall state that they were issued at his request.

(F) Witnesses summoned by subpoenas of the Board or its appointed board shall be entitled to some witness and mileage fees as are witnesses in proceedings in the State Courts of Florida. Fees payable to a witness summoned by a subpoena issued at the request of a respondent shall be paid by him, unless he is indigent in which case the Board shall bear the cost of said fees.

(G) Within ten (10) days after service of a subpoena upon any person, such person may petition the Board or its appointed board to revoke or modify the subpoena. The Board or its appointed board shall grant the petition if it finds that the subpoena requires appearance or attendance, at an unreasonable time or place, that it requires production of evidence which does not relate to any matter under investigation, that it does not describe with sufficient particularity the evidence to be produced, that compliance would be unduly onerous, or for other good reasons.

(H) In case of refusal to obey a subpoena, the Board or its appointed board or the person at whose request it was issued may petition for its enforcement in the appropriate court.

SECTION X - OTHER REMEDIES

Nothing herein shall prevent any person from exercising any right or seeking any remedy to which he might otherwise be entitled, or from filing of a complaint with any other agency or any court having proper jurisdiction.

SECTION XI - REPORT TO REAL ESTATE COMMISSION

If a real estate broker, a real estate salesman, or an employee thereof has been found to have committed an unlawful practice in violation of this Ordinance, or has failed to comply

with an order issued by the Board or its appointed board, the Board or its appointed board shall, in addition to the other procedures set forth herein, report the facts to the Real Estate Commission of the State of Florida.

SECTION XII - CONFLICTING ORDINANCES REPEALED

All other ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith to the extent of such conflict are hereby repealed.

SECTION XIII - LIMITED INVALIDATION

If any provision of this Ordinance or the application thereof of any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of the Ordinance and the application of the provisions to other persons not similarly situated or to other circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION XIV - EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance shall become effective pursuant to law.

ADOPTED this 26th day of May, 1987.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY: Gene R. Blackwelder
Gene R. Blackwelder
Its: Chairman

ATTEST:

T. J. "Jerry" Greeson
T. J. "Jerry" Greeson
Ex - Officio Clerk