

Star-Telegram

Tarrant apartment group responds to report of rental discrimination

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Last week's report from a Dallas group that suggested that there is discrimination in North Texas apartment rental practices has the industry's attention.

"We don't tolerate discrimination on any basis," said Michael Walker, president of the Apartment Association of Tarrant County and owner of Walker Holder Residential.

The North Texas Fair Housing Center, a Dallas nonprofit funded by the Housing and Urban Development Department, sent secret shoppers to 40 large complexes in the Metroplex and found different rents, availability, security deposits and move-in specials offered to whites, blacks, Hispanics and families. Different shoppers went to the same properties within an hour of each other, the group said.

Local industry people said that it is difficult to address the report's accuracy but that its findings are surprising given how large properties train managers.

"We don't have the full perspective" on what the report said, Darnell Harris, regional manager of Lincoln Property Co. and a past association president, said. Improper practices are "possible," he said. "It's hard to answer."

Walker and others said software used by larger properties can produce different prices at different times.

"Depending on the software, there's a possibility [managers] have the ability to price in terms of supply and demand," said Lisa Clark, association secretary and regional manager of Bell Partners. But outside of the software's pricing, industry people said, large properties generally don't allow managers to quote different prices.