

# **Aleton LLC**

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November 21, 2006

Northfield Human Rights Commission  
Attn: Judith J. Dirks  
801 Washington Street  
Northfield, MN 55057

Dear Ms. Dirks:

As the majority partner of Aleton LLC, I want to address the letter of November 15, 2006 from the Northfield Human Rights Commission. The letter stated a complaint was presented to the commission on November 9, 2006 from our tenant, Mrs. Ligia Barrientos of Las Delicias Restaurant located at 317 Division Street.

The basic problem here is not one of culture, communication or racism; but of one in which a tenant cannot afford to live and work in a building unless they are subsidized by the owners. That is something that we cannot continue to do.

I have attached a copy of their lease. The lease states they are responsible for timely rental payments of \$1,400.00, annual property taxes, and an annual expenditure of up to \$1,000.00 for repairs. We have kept this lease in force despite the below normal rental amount and consistently late rental payments to accommodate the family and their restaurant business. In addition, there is not evidence of the Barrientos completing repairs on the inside of the building (up to \$1,000.00 yearly to which they have agreed upon in the lease.)

We are unable to attain a rental permit from the City of Northfield due to the current inside condition of the upper level of the building. The Barrientos installed walls on the upper level that do not meet city code and we have repeatedly requested the walls be removed to allow us to attain a rental permit. The walls had not been removed as of November 15, 2006.

We have not refused to make repairs on the inside of the building; however, to make the necessary repairs we will need to increase the rental amount. The Barrientos do not want the rent to be increased and we cannot afford to make repairs without an increase to the rental rate.

Due to the lack of a rental permit, we are open to more liability, city fines, and potential insurance problems. This is a very difficult position to be in as a small business owner.

The current market rental rate for the main level of the building in its current condition is, we believe, above what they are paying. We have had numerous inquiries to rent the main level at a higher rate. The upstairs could be made into two apartments and rented out.

In addition, we have repaired the outside of 315 & 317 (Barrientos) buildings to help keep Northfield vibrant and looking good. We spent in excess of \$75,000.00 on both buildings to improve the outside appearance. This did not result in additional rent monies from the Barrientos for the improvements to their location.

We strive to keep all of our buildings in good condition and have been commended by the building inspector for our efforts. Our efforts can be seen at the 1500 & 1516 Jefferson Road Apartments. These apartments house several ethnic groups. We provide good housing at a fair price and have never received any allegations of improperly treating anyone. As a matter of fact, we sometimes have a waiting list of tenants who want to get out of the apartments they are in.

The Barrientos have put us in a difficult position to make improvements and repairs on a building that we consistently lose money on and goes against our human nature to keep our buildings in good condition. We are small business people and we cannot continually afford to lose money on buildings that we own.

Your letter states the Barrientos have copies of two letters they delivered to us regarding repairs; we have not received the letters to date. Once we receive the letters, I will address them specifically.

The Re/Max office at 315 Division Street provides a location for our company to collect rents, store supplies, and a space to meet with our tenants with appointments. This location does not house a full-time Aleton representative that can meet with tenants. The Re/Max office staff and agents do not deal with property management issues except for collecting rents and taking messages from tenants. For a representative to be available at any given time; a tenant must make an appointment in advance which allows us time to have our property manager available so he can interpret for us, if necessary. They cannot drop everything when someone walks in.

We understand that the students and restaurant supporters really care about them and the Hispanic community, but other businesses struggle in Northfield and they do not claim Human Rights violations to subsidize their businesses. The supporters want to be good citizens and help the Barrientos business survive, but their benevolence is with our money, not theirs.

We have been put in a very difficult position by the Barrientos with claims of racism and bad PR but reality is if we continue supporting them we lose money we do not have and a potential loss of our livelihood. It is a very difficult position to be in as a small business owner.

A compromise is still possible, if they are willing to move out of the upstairs to allow us to repair and maintain our building in the manner for which it should be AND pay fair market rent for the main level (the restaurant may stay open during the repair of the upstairs), and pay fair market rent for the upstairs once it is repaired and maintained PLUS pay their rent monies on time. This will allow their supporters an opportunity to pitch in and keep them in business.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Reiland  
Aleton, LLC.

Attachment