

# RIDGEFIELD FACES A HOUSING BATTLE

## Town Opposes Move to Buy Land for Low-Income Units

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**RIDGEFIELD, Conn., Aug. 5**—The Suburban Action Institute has taken an option to buy 11 acres in this northern Fairfield County residential community for the construction of 160 apartment units for low-income and middle-income families.

Town officials, who said they opposed the complex because they felt Ridgefield's cost of living was too high for low-income families, predicted that the project would not receive zoning clearances.

Neil Gold, a co-founder of the institute, a nonprofit White Plains-based organization which has sought to open suburban housing to lower income families, said the project was designed to meet "a need for this type of housing in the Ridgefield area."

He said that if the project did not receive zoning clearances, the institute would file a suit in Federal Court to force the community to accept the apartments.

### Previous Suit Won

Last week, the institute brought a Federal lawsuit against the town of Cornwall, charging that it used zoning ordinances to exclude minority groups and the poor.

The institute won a similar lawsuit last October, striking down zoning ordinances in Madison Township, N. J.

Institute spokesmen estimated that 380 people could reside in the apartment complex, where rents will range from \$100 to \$200 a month.

The project will be financed by Federal housing agencies and will be available to families with incomes ranging from \$4,000 to \$11,000, the institute said.

"Everyone I've spoken to is wholeheartedly opposed to the project," said Joseph L. McLinden, the Republican First Selectman, or Mayor, of Ridgefield.

"It is difficult for anybody making less than \$11,000 a year to live here. We don't need this type of housing and we don't want it."

The property sought by the institute is zoned for two-acre residential use.

It was first offered to the institute for an undisclosed price in January by George Kaiser, a former poultry farmer, who said he was disturbed that the town's zoning regulations discriminated against moderate-income families.

"I speak from personal experience," said Mr. Kaiser, who has lived in Ridgefield for 20 years, during which the town's population quadrupled to about 18,000 residents, while property values soared.

"Only one of my children was able to afford a house in Ridgefield," said Mr. Kaiser, who has four sons and four daughters.

Mr. Kaiser said the reaction of friends and neighbors to his offer to the institute was mixed.