

When my husband and I moved out of the 5th wheel we had been living/traveling in for about 12 years, we decided to purchase a manufactured home as we could pay cash since I was in my mid 70's and my husband in his early 80's by this time so we didn't think we wanted to take on a 30-year mortgage.

Two years after purchasing a home in Heidi Manor we were informed that the park was for sale. IPG (Investment Property Group) became our new landlords and after several months we were told there was a lease to sign but I was told no one received a copy to read over ahead of time and the timeline to sign was only a couple of weeks so most people would not be able to get some legal help ahead of the deadline. Some of us did decide to have an attorney check it over, anyway, and the attorney my daughter talked to said "tell your mother not to sign."

In the almost three years that IPG has owned this park our rent has gone from \$425.00 to \$478.00 for people who signed the lease. People who did not sign the lease went from \$425.00 to \$530.00 in the same length of time. A neighbor and I went to talk to the new manager and district manager shortly after the park had been purchased by IPG and told them that the higher they made our rent the lower the value of our homes was going to be. They stood across the room from us and looking right at us said "WE DON'T CARE!" Since IPG purchased our park, we have been told our investment has lost approximately \$20,000.00 in value.

Then, all of a sudden, the manager told all of us that if we had a signed lease, and decided we wanted to sell our home, the amount of rent we were paying would be transferrable to the new owner. We soon discovered that was not true and I confronted the manager and he admitted, "yes, I did lie, but I got people to sign the lease." All new people are required to pay a high rent. To me, this is BAIT AND SWITCH!! In the same almost three years, new buyers have gone from \$425.00 to \$675.00 a month, plus a \$500.00 deposit that is refundable with no interest, and since people tend to live in homes they own for 10 – 30 years, that is a long time to not receive interest on a deposit. We own our homes so what the \$500.00 deposit is paying for, we don't really know. IPG only owns the dirt our homes sit on and the carport/storage area, and we are required to take care of our own yards and pay for the upkeep of the carport/storage areas, even though they were cheaply made so they leak, the siding has rotted, etc. The park pays the property taxes on these carports and storage sheds.

The streets flood when it rains hard and we have been after them to get that fixed, the management does not enforce the rules, i.e., people keeping their carports free of garbage, old refrigerators, exercise equipment, yards mowed, and trees trimmed. There are rules and regulations but management won't enforce them. Rats have invaded some areas and they won't get exterminators to come in, nor get people to clean the garbage from their yards. Some areas of the park look like a slum/ghetto! Management doesn't seem to want to confront those tenants and told us "our park will never be a Homes and Gardens park." I told the manager it could be, if they would just enforce the rules of the park. I also told them that they certainly charge us rent like it was a Homes and Gardens Park.

We have all read that "affordable housing" in most areas is hard to find. Manufactured homes have, in the past, solved that problem, but if predatory corporations can raise the rent for these homes so high, even that will go away. PEOPLE NEED HELP!!

I have included a page from the December 17, 2018, TIME magazine concerning big corporations buying up manufactured home parks. I am sure the situation is much worse since this article was published and I hate to think where it is going! Also, if you would look back at some articles written in the KeizerTimes, you will see the history of IPG and what they have done to residents of some parks. An article from March 15, 2019, has headlines that read "GROUND ZERO of Keizer growth: Park owner has history of bad-faith dealings." Along with parks, such as Heidi Manor, IPG owns apartments and one in Portland has been in the news a few times in the last couple of years. The residents went on "strike" and then IPG tried evicting a tenant because he complained about the drugs, cockroaches, assaults, flooding, leaking, etc. IPG and IPM (Income Property Management) are all listed at the same address in Portland, so they are one and the same.

Can you pass these bills and make them retroactive back 3 years so we can buy our park and live without fear of what a big corporation can do to us?

Janice Heimer

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Heidi Manor,

Space 80

Mobile-home residents unite to take on landlords

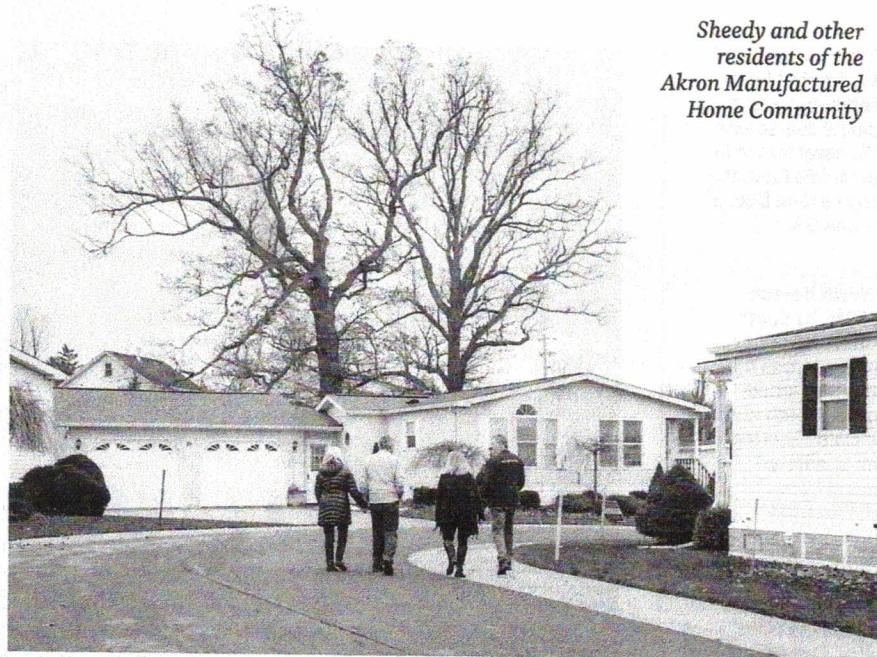
By Emma Whitford

MARIBETH SHEEDY GOT A LETTER FROM her new landlord the day after Christmas last year. So did many of her neighbors in the Akron Manufactured Home Community in Akron, N.Y. The park's new owner, Florida-based Sunrise Capital Investors, was proposing a rent increase of more than 40% starting in the spring. Anyone who couldn't pay would be evicted.

Mobile-home-park residents, most of whom own their trailers but rent the land beneath them, have always been among America's most vulnerable homeowners. But since the 2008 financial crisis, and as an aging generation of mom-and-pop park owners cashes out, a new breed of investors has bought up a growing share of the market. In 2016, Singapore's sovereign-wealth fund GIC and an unidentified investor bought a 71% stake in YES! Communities, which now owns and operates more than 200 manufactured-home communities across the U.S. This year, Blackstone Group, the world's largest private-equity firm, bought a portfolio of 14 mobile-home parks in California and Arizona for \$172 million. Sunrise, a comparatively small investment company with 12 parks nationwide, purchased the Akron park for \$3.77 million in November 2017.

The Manufactured Housing Institute, a national trade organization, praises private investment in mobile-home parks. "Investors are often better positioned to commit the necessary resources needed to maintain and upgrade a property," a spokesperson said in a statement to TIME. But Allison Formanack, an anthropology professor at the University of Colorado Boulder who has lived in mobile-home parks for her research, says these acquisitions can harm residents: "When large companies have to make a decision between profit or repair and maintenance, oftentimes they'll go with profit to maintain their shareholder value."

MOBILE HOMES, inhabited by more than 22 million Americans with a median annual income of less than \$30,000, repre-



Sheedy and other residents of the Akron Manufactured Home Community

sent the largest sector of nonsubsidized affordable housing in the country. Yet demand exceeds supply. Restrictive zoning has slowed the creation of new parks, and moving a trailer to another park is often prohibitively expensive.

According to Sunrise spokesman Ron Favali, Sunrise's goal "is to create clean, safe, friendly communities for all of our residents in all of our properties." But in an episode of his podcast, Sunrise CEO Kevin Bupp urges listeners to raise rents upon purchase, as doing so "goes immediately to your bottom line." Charging residents for utilities "allows you to pass your expense directly on to the resident and make a ton of extra money," he adds.

The Akron tenants got a reprieve from the hike thanks to a state law prohibiting park owners from raising rents more than once in a 12-month period—the previous owners had just issued a \$10 increase—but Sunrise still plans to raise rents this December and every

year afterward until they hit market rate of at least \$500 in 2021. (Residents now pay less than \$300.)

Residents nationwide are increasingly challenging their corporate owners. In Akron, they formed a tenant association that's not only fighting the rent hike but also expanding its organizing efforts to include other park tenants, and even traditional apartment renters, in the region. On Dec. 1, Sheedy started collecting checks for a rent strike, one of the first in the country to challenge major rent hikes by a multistate investment firm. She said Sunrise must reduce the increase—\$70 to \$95 depending on the trailer size—to no more than \$20. In the meantime, residents will pay their rent into an escrow account in anticipation of a court fight.

Attorney Sean MacKenzie, representing the park's management company M. Shapiro, says he intends to meet with Sheedy and the tenants' attorney to "gain further insight into any concerns of the tenants." Favali declined to comment on the strike but emphasized that current rents in the park are below market rate.

Sheedy believes the tenants will prevail. "We have nothing to lose," she said.

**22
MILLION**

Approximate number of Americans living in mobile homes with a median annual income of less than \$30,000

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SHANE LAVELLE FOR TIME