

Renters United

Rockville Renters United

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

FREE



Reed Tenant Assoc. members meet with State Del. Vaughn Stewart (5th from left), Rockville council member Zola Shaw (7th from left) and Emilee Towey (9th from left).

Reed Tenant Association dumps bogus trash fees

Renters at The Reed will collectively save hundreds of thousands of dollars a year because their tenants association forced a cut in trash fees.

Only two years ago, trash fees ran between \$20 and \$25 per month per unit. But the fee kept rising, hitting nearly \$100 in June. That's when The Reed Tenants Association (RTA) began to investigate.

Building owners set the fee by dividing what the waste removal company charged building owners each month by the number of occupied units. The RTA discovered the company had been fining The Reed for improperly sorting its trash. But instead of correcting the problem, Reed management simply passed the fines on to the tenants.

After the RTA alerted Rockville's Housing and Community Development Department and its landlord-tenant specialist, The Reed slashed the monthly fee to \$20.

"This is a textbook example of how tenant associations work to identify problems and get them fixed," said RTA president Grant Samms.

The RTA is now exploring ways to force The Reed to reimburse tenants for the bogus fees they paid. Meanwhile, Samms added, building managers have announced new and renewing tenants will pay trash fees of \$30 per-month per-unit, so the fight goes on.

Who Owns My Building?

Who is your landlord? Who pockets your rent check and hires your building manager? Can your landlord afford to spend more on maintenance and repairs? Do they *really* need another rent hike or more fees?

Every issue, we'll explore who owns Rockville's apartment buildings. As you'll see, our landlords are mostly billion-dollar companies based in other states. This means tens millions of dollars in rent payments flow *out* of our community every month, starving local businesses and weakening our economy.



The Trails at King Farm

Owner: **AEW Capital Management Corp., Boston, MA (Private Equity company*)**.

AEW calls itself "one of the world's largest global real estate investment managers." The company manages \$83.9 billion in real estate equity, debt and listed securities through 19 offices across North America, Europe and Asia.

AEW, in turn, is owned by **Natixis Investment Managers**, a subsidiary of BPCE, one of the two largest banking groups in France. Natixis reported \$1.4 trillion in managed assets in 2025.

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Speak out on changes to Rockville Landlord-Tenant Code

Changes are coming to laws and regulations that will affect Rockville renters in important ways

The proposed changes include requiring landlords to offer two-year leases; allowing tenants to terminate leases for such causes as domestic violence and unsafe/unhealthy conditions; stronger protection for tenant organizing; banning the use of online services by landlords to conspire in rent-fixing (so-called “algorithmic pricing”), and tighter regulation of non-rent fees.

“Some of the proposals are good – two-year leases and the ban on algorithmic rent-setting, for example,” said Chris Madden, president of The Huntington Tenants Association.

“But there are two major flaws,” Madden added. “First, the City’s own website shows rent stabilization is the No. 1 public demand. But capping rent hikes isn’t even mentioned in their plans.”

“Second is the dire lack of enforcement,” he continued. “How can the city take effective action if landlords don’t have to notify them of new fees or evictions? You can’t expect tenants, alone, to police these billion-dollar companies. That’s not a fair fight.”

The mayor and city council will vote on these and other proposals in April. In the meantime, the public can comment on changes they’d like to see either in person, at the opening of city council meetings, or online, at engagerockville.com (click on Landlord Tenant Code Rewrite).

Who Owns My Building?

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AEW focuses on senior and multi-family housing because, they say, these sectors are “highly profitable and outperform the broader market.”



Fenestra Apartments at the Square

Owner: **Morguard North American Residential Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT**)**, a subsidiary of the **Morguard Corporation, based in Ontario, Canada.**

Morguard North America owns and manages a \$19 billion real estate portfolio with 42 multi-suite residential properties (16 in Canada and 26 in the U.S.) with 11,963 apartments.

Morguard’s goal is to drive “value for those who invest” through a multi-pronged business strategy to “increase property values and cash flow through aggressive leasing ... minimize operating costs” and “dispose of properties where cash flows and values have been maximized.”

K. Rai Sahi, Morguard’s executive chair, owns 63% of the company and has an estimated net worth of \$1.2 billion. His daughter, Angela Sahi, directs Morguard’s North American operations.



Kanso Apartments, Twinbrook

Owner: **AvalonBay Communities, Arlington, VA (REIT**)**

AvalonBay owns and operates 314 apartment complexes (with 97,219 units) in 11 states worth \$20.6 billion. Their properties include 16 apartment complexes in Maryland, 16 in Virginia, and 6 in the District of Columbia.

In 2024 (the last full year reported) AvalonBay reported \$2.9 billion in revenues and \$1.1 billion in net income (i.e., after taxes and other expenses).

CEO and President Benjamin W. Schall receives

\$9.1 million a year in total compensation.

The D.C., Maryland, and New Jersey have sued AvalonBay for using RealPage, an online service that enables landlords to collaborate in fixing rents.

In March 2025, California tenants filed a class action suit accusing AvalonBay of cheating renters out of millions of dollars in security deposits.

And in June 2025, Legal Aid DC sued AvalonBay for discriminating against low-income tenants seeking to use housing vouchers to pay a portion of their rent.

***Private Equity companies** pool capital from corporate investors and high-income individuals to purchase, develop and manage commercial real estate (e.g., apartments, offices, and retail outlets). They promise investors significant, long-term returns.

****REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts)** sell shares in large-scale property portfolios (e.g., apartment complexes and shopping centers) to individual and corporate investors.

?? Did you know ??

- With rents averaging \$1,990 - \$2,800 a month, **Rockville is “one of the most expensive cities in the U.S.”** (Source: Apartments.com)
- 56% of Rockville renters** are “cost-burdened,” meaning they **spend more than 30% of their income on rent.** (Source: Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers)
- 25% of Rockville renters** – one in four of us! – are “severely cost-burdened,” meaning they spend more than half their income on rent. (Source: Montgomery County Planning Department)
- Rockville and Gaithersburg are exempt from the county’s rent stabilization law** because they operate independent housing authorities. This leaves our landlords free to raise rents as high as they please.

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