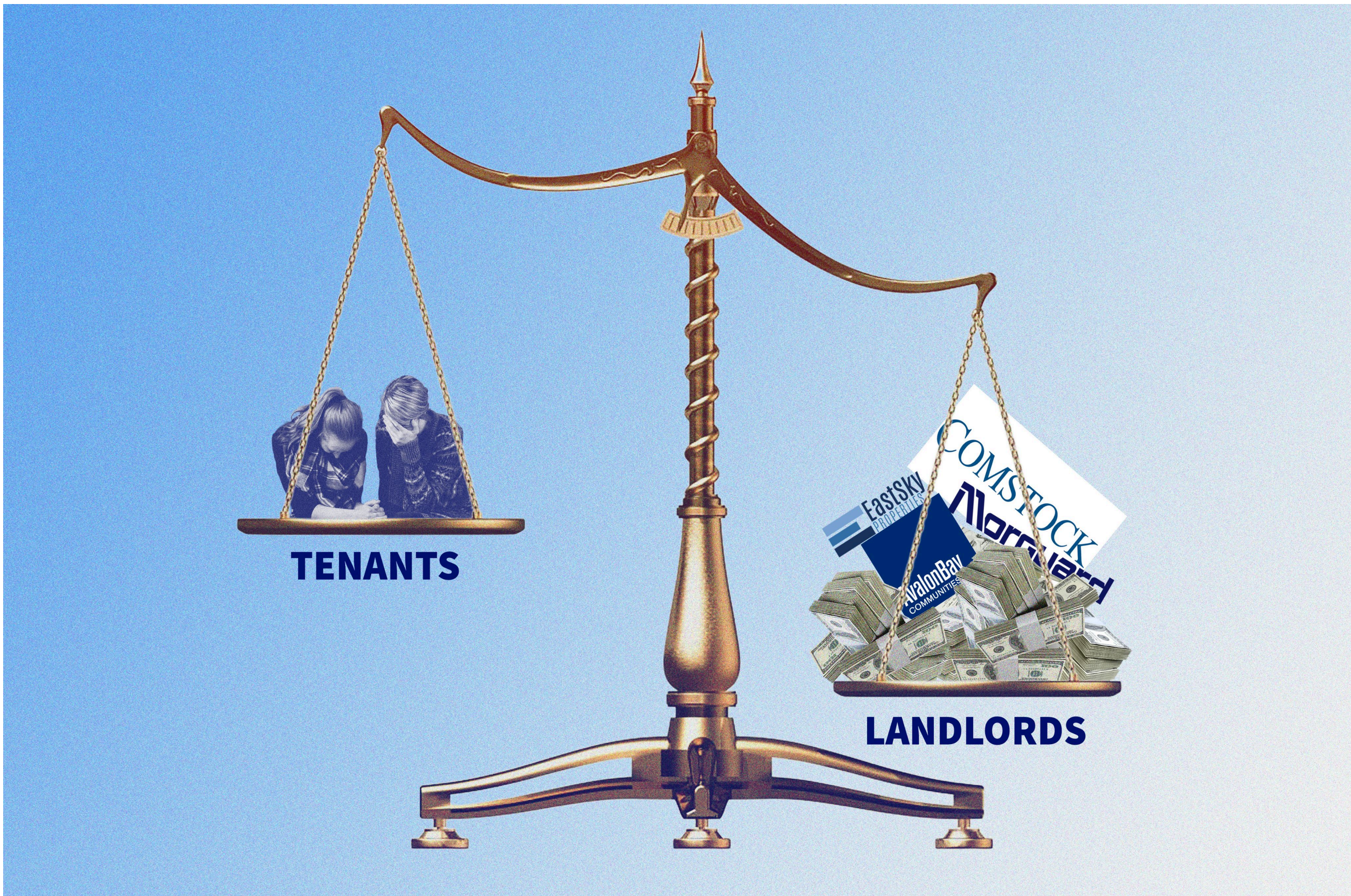


Revised Landlord-Tenant Code
Remains Stacked Against Rockville Renters



The Rockville City Council recently amended its “Landlord-Tenant Code.” Some changes help renters, while others delete or weaken important protections. The revisions take effect Jan. 1. The amended code outlaws “algorithmic rent-setting” (the use of computerized systems by landlords to collude in fixing rents), making Rockville the first Maryland city to ban the practice.

Revisions also restrict “pre-lease screening” by barring landlords from asking prospective tenants about their eviction history and requiring landlords to make conditional offers of housing prior to conducting criminal background checks. Landlords are also barred from rejecting applicants for committing non-violent crimes.

Forbidden fees

Other changes forbid landlords from charging fees for: processing rent payments; amenities or services previously included in the rent (excluding increases due to higher utility costs); repairs and maintenance landlords must by law perform, and trash removal (excluding “valet trash service” if offered as an option to regular service).

Landlords are also barred from demanding payment for a service if more than 120 days have passed without formally billing the tenant for that service.

No limits on raising rents and fees

However, the Council majority refused to adopt a rent stabilization law—by *far*, the top request of residents during months of written and oral public comment. They also refused to require that leases inform prospective tenants the County’s rent stabilization law does not apply to Rockville.

The Council deleted language (which is still in the County law) requiring landlords to notify the City 90 days prior to any rent increase. The deletion leaves City officials with no way of detecting or preventing rent-gouging. They also refused to cap or limit increases in allowable fees.

Rockville landlords remain free to raise rents and fees as high as they want.

NOTE: Council members Zola Shaw and David Myles supported rent stabilization and other revisions to better protect tenants.

City /County Records Show Rent Stabilization
Hasn’t Chased Away Construction

If rent stabilization discourages developers from building new apartments, then Rockville—which does *not* have rent stabilization—should be building more apartments than Montgomery County, which does cap rents.

But City and County records show that’s not what’s happening. In 2024, the year after the County enacted its rent stabilization law, both the County and the City saw near decade-high levels of permits issued for new multi-family units: 2,120 for those areas of the county covered by the law and 556 for Rockville.

Permits are reliable indicators of how developers are feeling

because they are issued only after all plans have been submitted and approved and all fees have been paid.

With the impact of tariffs, inflation and mass layoffs, both Rockville and Montgomery County issued fewer permits for new multi-family units in 2025, but Rockville saw the steeper decline. The 140 permits issued by the City last year marked a 71% drop off from the previous year: *more than double* the 33% decline for the County, which permitted 2,120 new units.

“It’s pretty clear from this data—and from academic evidence—that rent stabilization does not discourage developers from investing and building. All not having rent stabilization does is make it easy for landlords to squeeze more money from their tenants,” said Grant Samms, president of the Reed Tenants Association and a leader of Rockville Renters United.

Permits for Apartment Construction issued Jan 2023 - Mar. 2026

		# of Apartments																	
		2023				2024				2025				2026				<u>TOTAL</u>	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
MoCo		19	0	330	1088	493	318	928	381	800	264	0	356	106				=	5083
Rockville		0	12	0	0	48	181	0	327	0	0	13	147	0				=	728

Renters United is produced by Rockville tenants and published by Rockville Renters United (RRU). As a community publication, we need writers, artists, photographers and story ideas. To help, contact newsletter@rockvillenterers.org. To learn about RRU and how to form a tenants association where you live, visit rockvillenterers.org.

The following local businesses distribute *Renters United* and we appreciate their support. **King Farm:** King Craft Beer and Wine, Coffee Republic, King Farm Cleaners, Parcel Plus and Italiomo restaurant. **Town Center:** Bonchon, BobaPop, Hair Design Zone and Dirty Dough. **Twinbrook:** Downtown Brews and Bubble Tea Cafe. **Woodley Gardens:** Z&Z Manoushe Bakery. **Surrounding Areas:** Clear Skies Meadery and Liora’s Whole Pet.



Bubble Tea Cafe

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Who owns my building?

134-year-old Saul Centers is “Old Money” in Local Real Estate



B.F. Saul

The Saul family fortune doesn’t date back 500 years like the European nobility, but here, in the New World, the Sauls are legitimate “old money”—and proven survivors, too.

B.F. Saul entered the D.C. real estate business in Dec., 1892, barely eight weeks before the “Panic of 1893” crashed the U.S. economy. But the newborn Saul Co. not only survived, it expanded, buying bankrupt properties

on the cheap.

They expanded during the Great Depression, too. Renamed “Saul Centers” in 1993, the company also survived the 2008 housing crisis which vaporized \$19 trillion of household wealth.

The company’s assets are valued at \$2.2 billion.

Now based in Bethesda, Saul Centers owns 50 shopping centers (most with grocery stores), plus 7 mixed-use properties with 1,824 apartments plus retail and office space, *all* in the D.C./Baltimore corridor.

Expansion plans include projects with 2,500 apartments—*all* in Montgomery County.

[We] “focus on thriving submarkets within the Washington D.C. metropolitan area where dense population and limited land availability restrict new supply and support long-term asset growth.” (*Saul Centers 2026 Annual Report*)

Translation: “We focus on the crowded D.C. region, where housing and land are scarce, and it’s easy to raise the rent.”

Project delay: is it money or politics?

But Saul Centers has choked a bit on its recent success.

In March, the company announced a 33% drop in net income primarily due to two costly projects: *The Milton at Twinbrook Quarter Phase 1*, which opened in 2024, and *The Hampden House* in Bethesda, which opened last year.

Shortly after reporting the loss, the company announced it was delaying construction of a large apartment complex near the North Bethesda Metro station.

Interestingly, the company blamed the delay on Montgomery County’s rent stabilization law, not on their sharp drop in income.

This is interesting for two reasons. First, rent stabilization is *never even mentioned* in a 14-page list of “risk factors” in Saul Centers’ annual report to investors—or anywhere else in the 277-page document for that matter.

Second, the same report tells investors the company’s “primary strategy” is to continue building residential, mixed-use, transit-oriented projects—and that *“all such sites” will be in Montgomery County.* (Emphasis ours.)

Which is more believable? Delaying a major project because of a 33% drop in income? Or because of a law that’s been on the books for 3 years in the same county you’re telling investors will be the site of your future projects?

Their given reason sounds a lot like politics. But maybe you don’t survive 134 years in real estate without knowing how to play the game.



The Milton at Twinbrook Quarter

- The Milton:
- 11 stories, 452 units, near Twinbrook Metro.
 - Wegmans supermarket and Brazilian steakhouse at ground level.
 - Planned expansion: additional buildings, hundreds more apartments, entertainment, retail, and offices surrounding a park-like space.



Hampden House, Bethesda

- Hampden House:
- 25 stories, 370 units near Bethesda Metro and (soon) the Purple Line.
 - Five floors of below-ground parking
 - *Food Market* restaurant at ground level

Rockville Renters: Get Together, Face-to-Face! Make Friends, Have Fun, Feel Our Power

For dates and times, join our mailing list: bit.ly/rru-update

- RRU HAPPY HOUR:** Kick back with other tenants. Get acquainted and have some laughs.
- TRUNK OR TREAT 2026:** Decorate your car. Bring your kids. If you don’t have a car or kids, who cares? This is for everyone.
- GENERAL PUBLIC MEETING:** It’s time to unite behind a strategy — a roadmap to action —to make Rockville a renter-friendly place to live. Sign onto our mailing list for more on this very important meeting.



CORRECTION: The landlord who pushed the Fontina Grille out of King Farm and then sued them is the Sterling Organization. We misspelled their name in our July/August issue.