

Agenda  
Ottawa County Housing Commission  
West Olive Administration Building – Board Room  
12220 Fillmore Street, West Olive, MI 49460  
Thursday, July 11, 2024, 10:00 am



1. Call to Order
2. Establish Quorum
3. Approval of the Agenda for the July 11, 2024 Meeting
4. Approval of the [Minutes](#) from the June 6, 2024 Meeting
5. Ratify Election of Officers

**Motion:** To nominate Jared Schuitema as President

**Motion:** To nominate Klynt Marcusse as Vice President

6. Old Business
  - A. RLF Implementation Update (Standing Agenda Item)
  - B. Housing Brownfield TIF Legislation
  - C. [MicroHomes Concept](#)
7. New Business
  - A. [Legislation: SB 486-492 – Manufactured Housing Law](#)
8. Public Comments
9. Other Business/Discussion Items
  - A. [FYI Articles](#) - *the inclusion of the FYI list of articles does not in any way imply endorsement or approval by the Ottawa County Housing Commission of the items contained therein*
  - B. Next Meeting: August 1, 2024 (10:00 a.m.)
10. Adjournment

**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES****OTTAWA COUNTY HOUSING COMMISSION**

DATE: June 6, 2024

PLACE: Ottawa County Fillmore Complex, Conference Room E

PRESENT: Holly Cole, Pat Harmon, Klynt Marcusse, Jared Schuitema

ABSENT: Jon Anderson

STAFF: Paul Sachs, Pam Vanden Heuvel, Kylie Vosburg

PUBLIC: David Barnosky, Annie Deater, Nick Rolinski, Don Wilkinson

CALL TO ORDER

Vice President Schuitema called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. A quorum was present to do business.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

HC 24-18 Cole moved to approve the Agenda for June6, 2024. The motion passed. UNANIMOUS

HC 24-19 Marcusse moved to approve the Minutes from May 16, 2024. The motion passed.  
UNANIMOUS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

HC 24-20 Harmon nominated Jared Schuitema as President.  
There were no additional nominations.  
The motion passes as shown by the following votes: Yeas: Cole, Harmon, Marcusse, (3)  
Abstentions: Schuitema (1) UNANIMOUS

HC 24-21 Harmon nominated Klynt Marcusse as Vice President.  
There were no additional nominations.  
The motion passes as shown by the following votes: Yeas: Cole, Harmon, Schuitema (3)  
Abstentions: Marcusse (1) UNANIMOUS

OLD BUSINESS

Sachs stated that there were no pertinent updates on the Revolving Loan Fund and that both Chris Uhl and Ryan Kilpatrick were unavailable to attend today's meeting due to the Hom Flats Groundbreaking Event.

Sachs informed the Commission that besides the Terra Station brownfield housing project that was recently approved there are two new brownfield housing projects making their way through the approval process: Winsor Place and Prospect Flats.

NEW BUSINESS

Sachs provided a brief overview of data analysis to-date from the survey that was distributed within the recent press release (90 responses so far). Harmon suggested sending a follow up survey inquiring the respondent's home ownership status since a lot

**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES**

of the respondents weren't first time home buyers, and to ask what they consider is a reasonable monthly mortgage payment they could handle, if willing to share. Sachs stated that at least two townships have approached him for additional information on the MicroHomes Concept. Sachs introduced Nick Rolinski, a designer based locally. Sachs stated that the Department of Strategic Impact will be hiring an intern to assist with the MicroHomes Concept (possibly August). The Commission discussed more ways to get the MicroHomes Concept noticed (i.e. grocery store bulletin boards, large local employer bulletin boards, gas station pump TVs), how to change local official's perspective of MicroHomes, and upcoming housing studies.

HC 24-22 Harmon moved to approve the formation of a subcommittee to explore the viability of Microhome Development Concept that initially includes two (2) members of the Housing Commission, two (2) County Staff, two (2) citizen advocates, and one (1) local township official. The motion passed. UNANIMOUS

HC 24-23 Harmon moved to appoint Jared Schuitema and Pat Harmon as representatives of the Ottawa County Housing Commission to serve on the newly established MicroHomes Work Group, as well as Paul Sachs and Kylie Vosburg to represent County Staff, designer Nick Rolinski and housing champion Peter Kooshian to represent citizen advocates, and a local township official to be appointed later. Sachs will compile a list of interested local officials. Marcusse will reach out to Scott Corbat (Grand Haven) to garner his interest in serving on the MicroHomes Work Group. The motion passed. UNANIMOUS

Sachs will collaborate with Rolinski on the creation of an outline/timeline and objectives for what is expected of the work group. President Schuitema suggested appointing the intern to the work group. Rolinski agreed and stated that having the appointed township official be a building inspector and able to collaborate with the intern on the project would be great.

HC 24-24 Harmon moved to appoint the intern to the MicroHomes Work Group. The motion passed. UNANIMOUS

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Public comments were made by the following:

1. David Barnosky
2. Annie Deater
3. Don Wilkinson

**OTHER BUSINESS/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

President Schuitema stated that the next Housing Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 11, 2024 at 10:00 am.

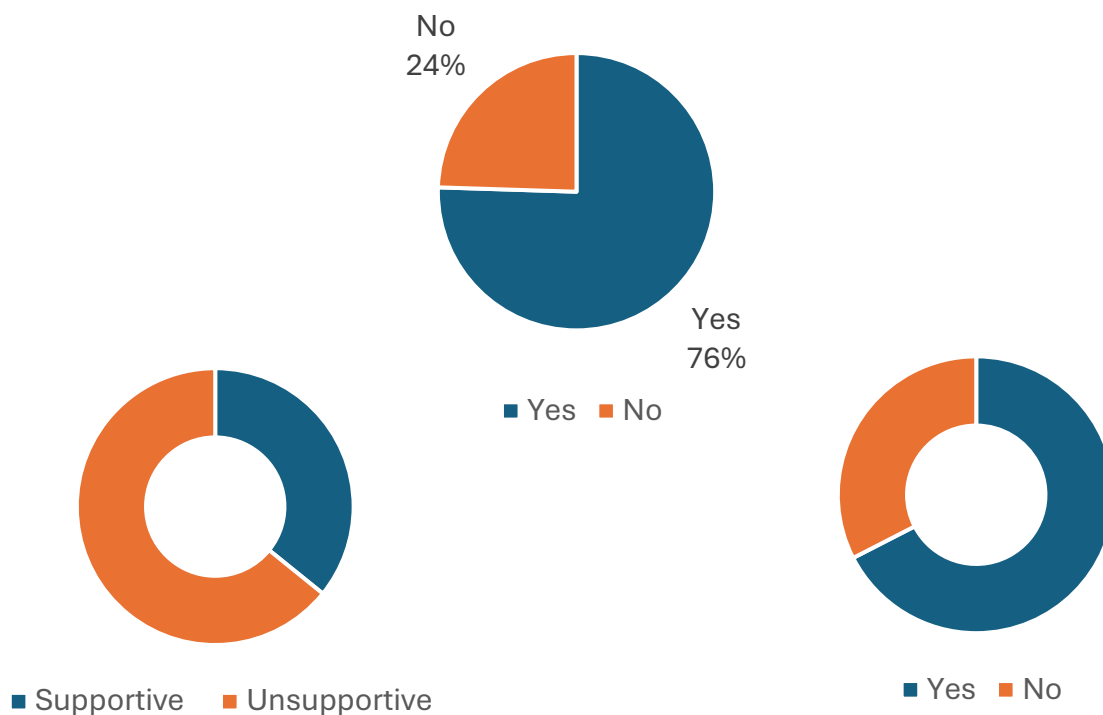
President Schuitema stated that the Commissioners are invited to the Hom Flats Groundbreaking Event today at 11:00am in Holland at Van Raalte Park.

**ADJOURNMENT**

HC 24-25 Schuitema moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 a.m. The motion passed. UNANIMOUS

## MicroHome Interest Submission Form Data (6/25/2024)

Just over 75% of respondents are interested in or supportive of the MicroHomes Concept (N=298).



37% of those not willing to live in a MicroHome are supportive of the initiative.

67% of all respondents are willing to live in a MicroHome.

Those interested in MicroHomes on average have **2 people in their household.**

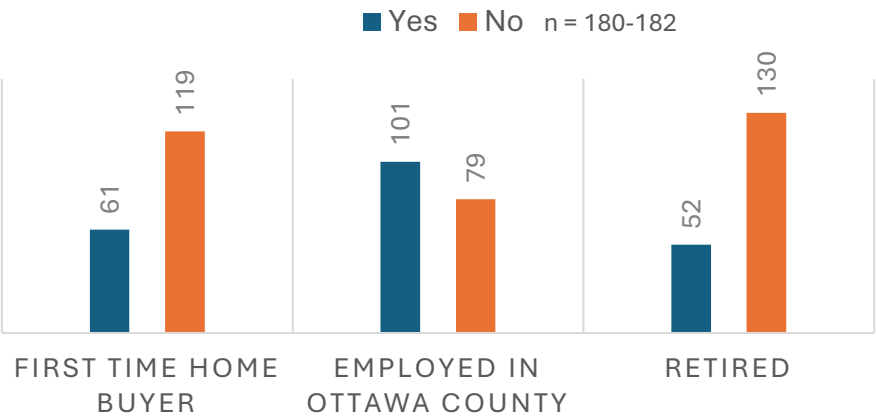
When asked what their realistic, ideal mortgage would be, the average response<sup>1</sup> was **\$913.86 a month.**

The MicroHome survey has gathered **112 emails** from interested individuals.

# MicroHome Interest Submission Form Data (6/25/2024)

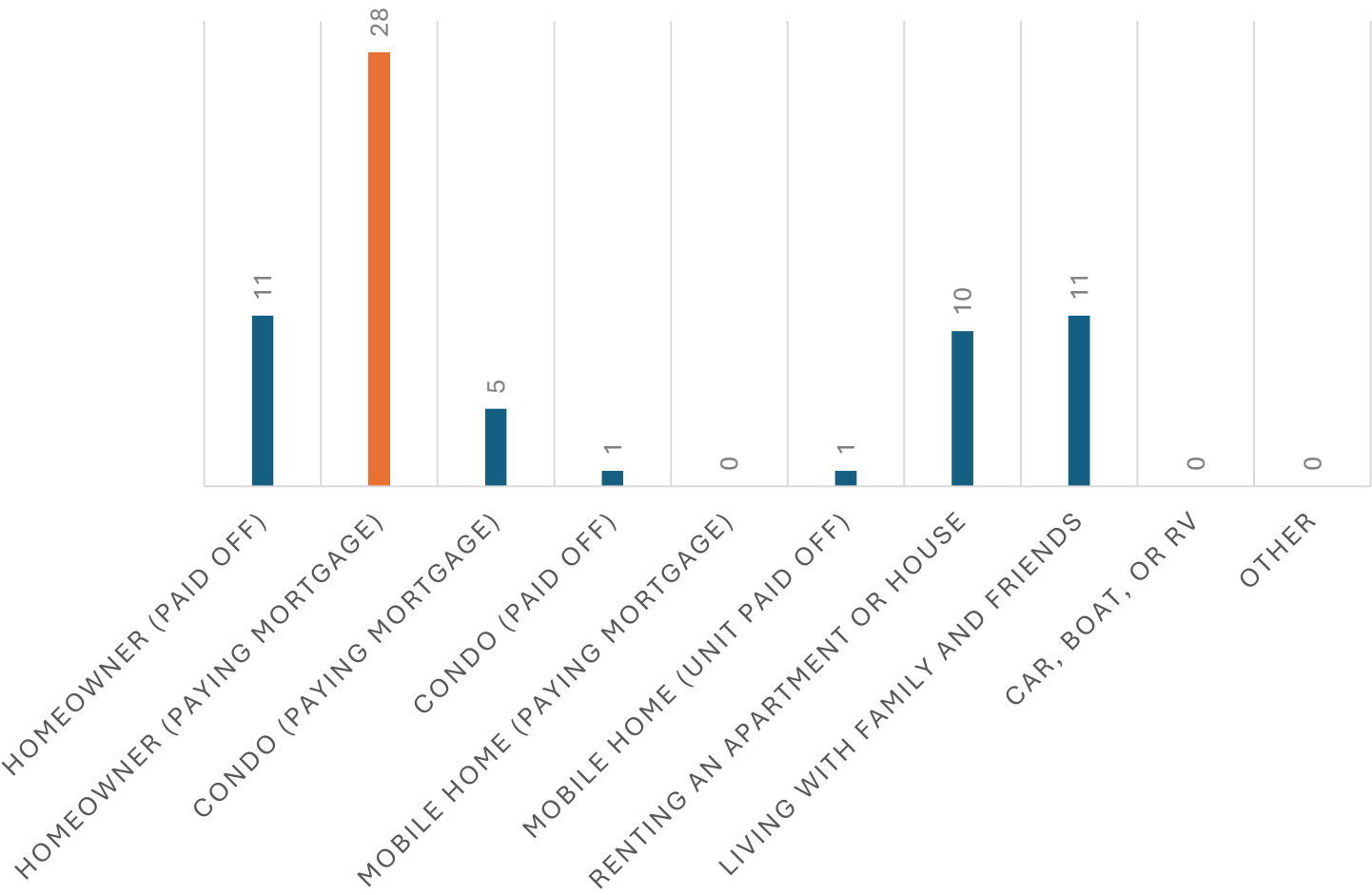
Those **interested in living in** MicroHomes (67%)....

## DEMOGRAPHICS



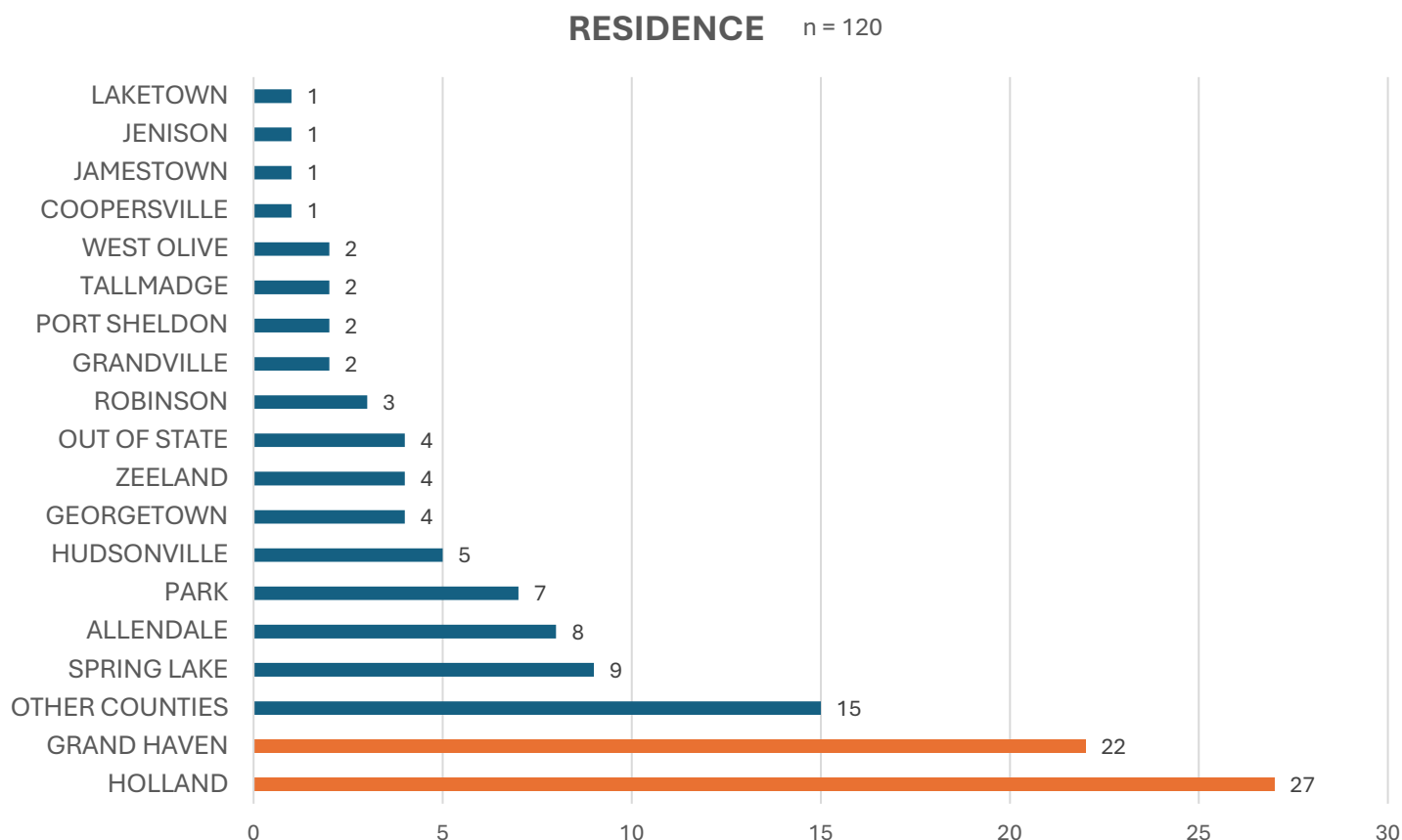
...are most likely to be **working age** adults, **employed** in Ottawa County, and **already paying a mortgage** on a home.

## LIVING SITUATION n = 120



## MicroHome Interest Submission Form Data (6/25/2024)

Those **interested in living in MicroHomes** (67%)....



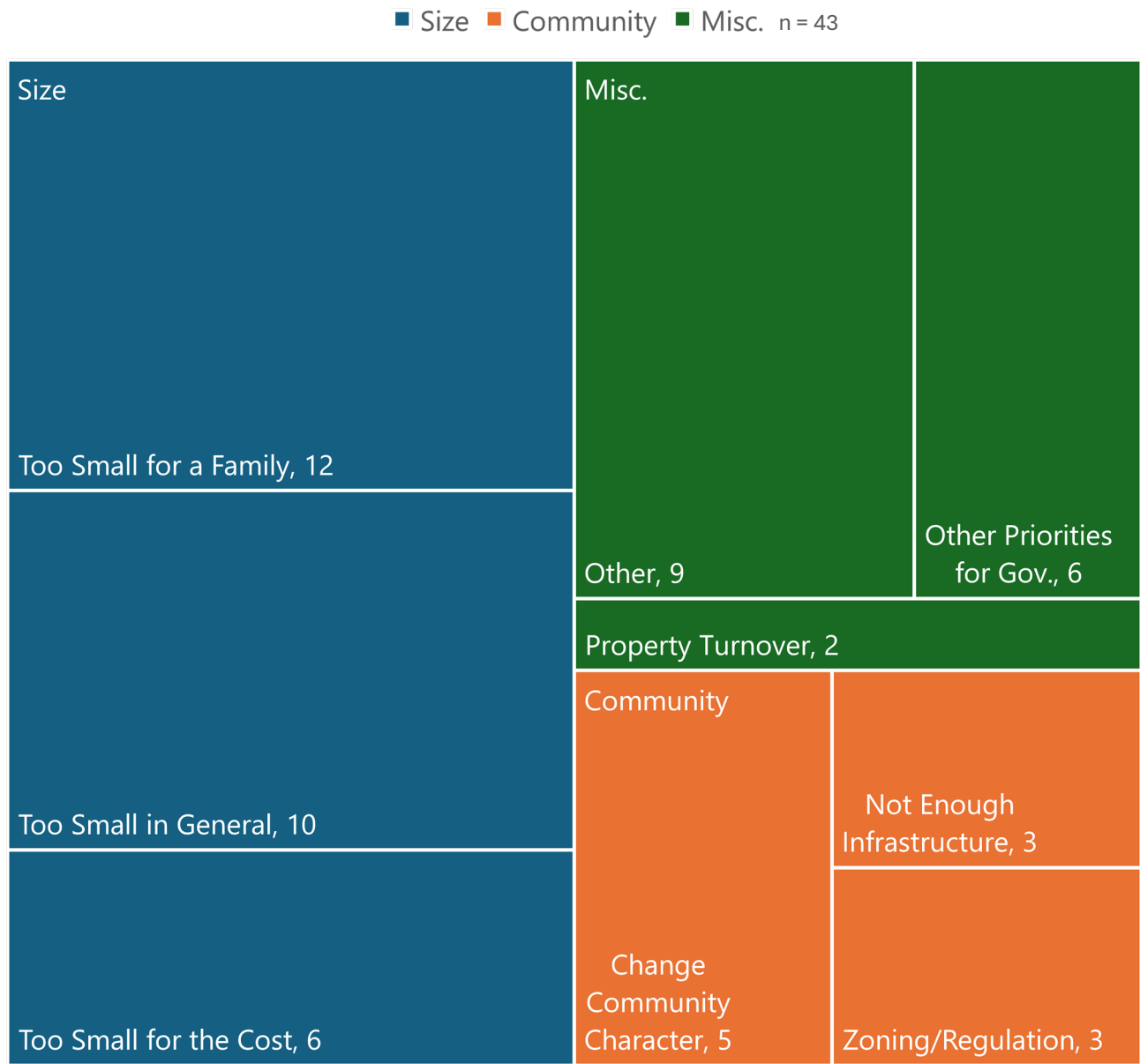
...are most likely to live in the Grand Haven or Holland Areas.  
**Nearly all municipalities have at least one interested resident.**

Feedback from those interested is enthusiastic. Respondents tell stories of wanting to **downsize** late in life, **working fulltime and living with their parents**, wanting a **home for a disabled relative**, and simply needing **modest, affordable living**.

MicroHome Interest Submission Form Data (6/25/2024)

Those **unsupportive** of MicroHomes (24%)....

FREQUENCY<sup>2</sup>



...are most likely to **believe that MicroHomes are too small** for families, the cost, or for general use.

<sup>2</sup> Each box represents a reason why the respondent would not like to live in a MicroHome or is unsupportive of the concept. The topics are organized into three categories, the **size** of the MicroHomes, the impact on the **community**, and **miscellaneous** reasons. The size of the box corresponds with the frequency it was mentioned across negative responses.



Senate Fiscal Agency  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536



Telephone: (517) 373-5383  
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Senate Bills 486 and 490 (Substitute S-1 as reported)  
Senate Bills 487 through 489 (as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Senator John Cherry (S.B. 486)  
          Senator Darrin Camilleri (S.B. 487)  
          Senator Stephanie Chang (S.B. 488)  
          Senator Sylvia Santana (S.B. 489)  
          Senator Mary Cavanagh (S.B. 490)  
Committee: Housing and Human Services

## **CONTENT**

Senate Bill 486 (S-1) would amend the Mobile Home Commission Act to do the following:

- Rename the Mobile Home Commission to the Manufactured Housing Commission (Commission).
- Modify the Commission's membership.
- Require the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) to establish a database of all park owners and make the database available on its website, by July 1, 2024.
- Require LARA to revise the Mobile Home Code by July 1, 2025, and specify that the revised rules would have to include requirements for installers, repairs, inspections, and retailers.
- Allow local governments to adopt ordinances to require the owner of a mobile home to post a surety bond to cover health and safety related expenses.
- Require the Commission to consult with local governments before recommending rules to LARA.
- Require LARA, in consultation with the Commission, to promulgate rules for determining if a park were distressed.
- Allow an owner of a distressed park to appeal LARA's determination and prescribe the appeals process.
- Require an owner of a park to apply for a provisional license if the park had not previously been licensed, beginning July 1, 2024.
- Establish licensure requirements in the Act.
- Reduce, from three years to one year, the term of a mobile home park license, beginning January 1, 2025.
- Specify that LARA would have to establish a way for the public to report potentially unlicensed park owners.
- Require an owner of a park to notify LARA within 30 days of the sale of the park or if an owner died.
- Prescribe the penalties for a failure to update LARA with any required information upon subsequent license renewal.
- Specify that regulation and licensure of a park would fall to a park owner instead of a park operator.
- Require an owner of a park to post a copy of the owner's license in an accessible location and allow LARA to impose a civil fine of up to \$5,000 for not doing so.
- Increase license fees for a park.
- Prescribe requirements for license renewal.
- Prohibit an unlicensed park owner from collecting rent, allow a resident to bring an action in court for a violation of the prohibition, and require the court to appoint a receiver to operate a park in violation of the prohibition.
- Allow an owner of a park to seek approval from the Commission for a rent increase.



- Require the Commission to approve a rent increase request upon receipt of documentation demonstrating that the request was necessary.

Senate Bill 487 would amend the Mobile Home Commission Act to do the following:

- Allow LARA to enter into an agreement with an appropriate local government to conduct an inspection of a park.
- Allow LARA to charge a reinspection fee if a park needed to be reinspected.
- Require the owner of a park to retain records of granted design and construction variances.
- Require LARA to promulgate rules pertaining to training and educational requirements for installers and repairers of parks.
- Prohibit a park owner from engaging in unfair or deceptive practices such as charging more for utilities than a utility service, mandating exclusive rent payments, or charging unrelated fees for reasonable health and safety costs.
- Prescribe certain requirements of park lease agreements, including a minimum lease length of one year.

Senate Bill 488 would amend the Mobile Home Commission Act to prescribe the conditions under which a mobile home park owner could declare a mobile home in the park abandoned and the process that a mobile home park owner would have to follow to obtain the title of the abandoned mobile home.

Senate Bill 489 would amend the Mobile Home Commission Act to do the following:

- Require the owner of a park to notify LARA, an applicable local government, and certain residents of the intent to change land use or sell the park.
- Specify how residents would have to be notified based on the presence of a home owners association (HOA) within the park.
- Allow an HOA or cooperative to express interest in purchasing the park and specify the procedure for an owner to consider the offer and complete the sale with the HOA or cooperative.
- Prescribe the process for residents to bring legal action for damages if an owner did not comply with the notice requirement.
- Allow the Commission to impose a maximum administrative fine of \$5,000 for a violation of the Act.
- Prescribe the process for LARA to identify and attempt to remedy an unlicensed park owner.
- Prescribe a maximum fine of \$100,000 after notice and hearing for an unlicensed park owner who did not apply for a license within 30 days.
- Prescribe that fines could be collected through a judgment lien or writ of garnishment issued by the Department of Treasury.
- Allow the Attorney General to bring a civil action to recover unpaid fines or fees.

Senate Bill 490 (S-1) would amend the Truth in Renting Act to reflect the leasing requirements proposed by Senate Bill 487.

The bills are tie-barred.

MCL 125.2302 et al. (S.B. 486)

125.2317 et al (S.B. 487)

Proposed MCL 125.230j (S.B. 488)

125.2335 et al. (S.B. 489)

Proposed MCL 554.634a (S.B. 490)

## **BRIEF RATIONALE**

According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Housing and Human Services, many individuals are facing challenges with housing access, and manufactured housing has traditionally been an option for attainable housing; however, homeowners of manufactured homes are reportedly experiencing unjustifiable rent increases and declining infrastructure in manufactured housing communities. It has been suggested that licensing standards for the communities be updated and that LARA be given additional tools to enforce the proposed standards for the improvement of the manufactured homes market.

Legislative Analyst: Eleni Lionas

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

### LARA

The bills would have a significant but indeterminate fiscal impact on State government and an indeterminate fiscal impact on local units of government.

Senate Bill 486 would restructure the licensing system for mobile home parks and related licenses under the Mobile Home Commission Act. Currently, the term for a mobile home park license is three years. The bill would revise this period to one year, beginning on January 1, 2025. Licenses issued on or before December 31, 2022, would expire on December 31, 2024. As of October 2023, approximately 1,000 licenses would fall into that expiration category. Less than 1% of these licenses are for seasonal parks.

The changes to the license fees included in the bill are shown in the table below:

<b>Proposed Changes Under SB 486</b>			
	Current Law (every three years)	Oct. 1, 2023, to Dec. 30, 2024 (annual)	On and after Dec. 31, 2024 (annual)
Mobile Home Park	\$225	\$500	\$750
Per site fee for home sites in excess of 25	\$3	\$5	\$7
Mobile Home Park, Seasonal	\$120	\$300	\$400
Per site fee for home sites in excess of 25	\$1.50	\$3	\$4

These license fees are deposited into the Mobile Home Code Fund. The Fund is used for the Bureau of Construction Codes, the Bureau of Fire Services, and other overhead expenses within LARA upon appropriation by the Legislature. The proposed changes likely would result in significantly increased revenue to LARA, although the exact amount would depend upon the number of licenses applied for and that met the new criteria required under the bill. Based on the core annual fees alone and current license counts, it is likely that LARA would collect \$500,000 or more in additional annual revenue under the bill if the number of licensees did not change significantly. It is possible that due to the more stringent requirements, fewer individuals would qualify as licensees; however, the increase in fees likely would offset this loss.

The bill also would create a new provisional license for mobile home parks. Beginning July 1, 2024, a mobile home park not previously licensed would need a provisional license to operate. No fee for a provisional license is specified in the bill.

The bills would require LARA to employ "an appropriate number" of qualified employees to implement and enforce the Act as well as the rules promulgated under it. Although LARA currently enforces and administers the Mobile Home Commission Act and most related rules, the changes made under the bill, as well as the new and revised rules that could be required under it, likely would necessitate one or more additional Full Time Equivalents (FTE) and appropriations to fully satisfy the Department's duties and responsibilities. The average cost of an FTE, including benefits, is \$137,500 per year. The number of employees needed would depend partially on the number of applicants who qualify under the new licensee parameters. Additional duties for LARA would include additional inspections. Senate Bill 487 would allow LARA to contract this work out to local governments, which could bear minor additional costs related to the development and administration of these agreements; however, in the absence of such an agreement, the cost of these inspections would fall to LARA. As described above, it is possible that LARA could need to engage additional inspectors.

The Department also would have to establish a publicly accessible database of owners that would contain key licensing information, by July 1, 2025. It currently has such a database but is possible that it could need additional funding to ensure compliance with the bills. The Department could charge a \$100 processing fee if an owner failed to update contact information as required under the bill.

The Department could elect to conduct a background check on an applicant or a person who holds a beneficial interest in a park. The number of background checks performed could increase due to the expansion of the definition of a person with beneficial interest included in the bill. The Department could use the background system maintained by the Department of State Police for this purpose. The cost to conduct a single search is \$10. The bill does not specify whether LARA would charge the applicant or person with interest for the cost of the search.

Senate Bill 486 would require LARA to revise the Mobile Home Code by July 1, 2025. This process likely would be covered by existing appropriations, but additional staff time and administrative costs could increase expenditures. The Department would need to consult with additional entities to develop these recommendations.

Senate Bill 486 also would allow LARA to impose an administrative fine of not more than \$5,000, following appropriate steps as required under the Administrative Procedures Act, if a licensed owner failed to post a copy of the owner's license as required under the bill. It also would require the payment of all previously assessed fees and administrative fines for an individual to be considered to have completed an application. The Department could assess a late renewal fee of up to 50% of the license application fee if a renewal were submitted more than seven days after the expiration of a license. All revenue from fines assessed under the Mobile Home Commission Act is deposited into the Mobile Home Code Fund.

Senate Bill 489 retains the current \$50,000 cap on civil fines assessed for violations of the Act; however, it would require a fine of up to \$100,000 to be assessed if an unlicensed owner of a mobile home park did not apply for licensure within a 30-day period after being notified by LARA that the owner was required to obtain a license. The bill directs LARA to refer cases of nonpayment to the Attorney General for possible civil action.

The revenue from fines would depend upon the number of violations found and fines levied.

#### The Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)

In addition to promulgating rules, EGLE could enter into agreements with local governments

to enforce rules under its purview. While any costs would depend upon the specific details of any such agreement, it is likely that the bills would have a negligible fiscal impact on EGLE.

#### Department of State

The bill would have a negligible fiscal impact on the Department of State. The provisions that would require the Department to send out notifications of abandoned mobile homes would require some additional staff time, but those costs likely would be absorbable within annual appropriations.

#### Judiciary

The bills would not have a significant fiscal impact on district or circuit courts. The addition of certain prohibitions against unlicensed park owners potentially could reduce district court caseloads, while the provisions that direct certain cases to circuit courts could result in some additional circuit court hearings; however, these costs likely would be absorbed by current appropriations levels.

#### Attorney General

The bills could result in minor costs to the Department of Attorney General should LARA decide to bring a civil action against individuals who neglected to pay the new \$100,000 fine for failure to acquire a license; however, the Attorney General may exercise authority over similar violations under current law. The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs would be unlikely to refer enough cases to the Attorney General to meaningfully affect costs.

#### Local Government

The bills likely would not have a significant fiscal impact on local units of government. It is possible that agreements between a local government and LARA or EGLE for inspections or enforcement could create minor administrative costs for local offices; however, these costs would depend on the specific details of any such contract. Under the bills, these costs would default to the State in the absence of an agreement.

Date Completed: 6-13-24

Fiscal Analyst: Bobby Canell  
Jonah Houtz  
Elizabeth Raczkowski  
Michael Siracuse

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.



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# As private equity buys up mobile home parks, Michigan ranks second highest

Updated: Jun. 13, 2024, 10:59 a.m. | Published: Jun. 13, 2024, 10:51 a.m.



Baltimore Terrace Mobile Home Park in Hastings on Monday, April 17, 2023. After the mobile home park was purchased by hedge fund-linked investment firm, some residents say the water quality is poor and repairs are being ignored while rent prices have increased. (Cory Morse | MLive.com) Cory Morse | MLive.com



By **Rose White | rwhite@mlive.com**

Big-pocketed investors have built a thick portfolio of Michigan mobile home parks – with one in 10 now owned by private equity firms.

In recent years, mobile home parks across the country have been purchased by investors at a rapid pace. But a new tracker released this week by the Private Equity Stakeholder Project, a watchdog group, reveals the full scope of private equity's stake in manufactured housing.

"It's just been a real increase," said Jordan Ash, housing director for the Private Equity Stakeholder Project. "They've definitely been much more aggressive in terms of acquisition over the last decade."

The tracker shows 11 private equity firms own 1,095 parks nationally, with a disproportionate number in Michigan, which ranks second – between Florida and Texas – for mobile home parks owned by private equity-backed companies, despite being 13th for the total number of parks. There are 109 Michigan parks with 33,115 lots now under private equity control. A map shows most are scattered across a thick band in the Lower Peninsula.

"There's a real concentration," Ash said.

**Related:** A hedge fund bought Michigan mobile home parks. Things fell apart.

It's unclear exactly why Michigan is at the top of the list, but some of the largest private equity mobile park owners have high numbers in the state.

YES Communities, which is owned by Stockbridge Capital Partners in a joint venture with global investors, has more than a quarter of its lots in Michigan. Havenpark Capital, operating as Havenpark Communities, has 28% of its lots here. And Alden Global Capital, which Ash says has been on an "enormous acquisition spree" as Homes of America, has 13% of its lots in Michigan.

Almost half the private equity acquisitions were supported by federally backed lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, according to the Private Equity Stakeholder Project. Some of these firms are public about their investments, while others like Alden Global Capital have been quietly buying up parks under different LLCs.

"It's really hard to know who owns an individual park, but then also to really get a sense of the entirety of it, how large it is and how many parks they own," Ash said.

The Private Equity Stakeholder Project is a nonprofit watchdog organization that looks at the impact of private equity in climate, labor, health care, surveillance, detention and housing.

**Related:** Mobile home residents would rather pay for bottled water than trust the tap

Private equity, which has grown rapidly seeing a 60% increase in funds over the past five years, works by pooling money from investors to buy a company, restructure it and sell for a profit.

An infusion of cash and private equity's involvement can help companies improve operations and boost their value. But critics say private equity ownership has led to higher rents in housing, market concentration in healthcare and shrinking employment in retail.

"The private equity business model, although not all companies follow this exactly, is also about short term profits," Ash said.

At mobile home parks, there's been a track record of companies raising rents, tacking on fees and cutting back on maintenance.

Reporting has documented these impacts in Iowa, New York, Colorado, Tennessee and across the country. In Michigan, residents at parks owned by Havenpark Capital and Alden Global Capital previously told MLive about climbing rents and deteriorating conditions.

Havenpark Capital, which owns 15 parks in Michigan, has previously pointed out how it's been able to invest in its communities. The company most recently put \$600,000 toward upgrades at Swartz Creek Estates in Genesee County and poured \$12 million into improving River's Edge in Macomb County.

**Related:** 'Price-fixing cartel': Big Michigan mobile home park owners accused of conspiracy

For Karen Siebert, 70, who has lived at Woodland Ridge in South Lyon for the past six years, her rent normally increased between \$20 and \$25 a year. But after Windward Communities, owned by Green Courte Partners, bought the park last year, her lot rent jumped \$50. It'll go up another \$33 this year.

It's frustrating for Siebert to not know what her rent will look like from year to year.

"At this rate, I probably have another six to eight years here. I'm just not going to pay that kind of rent, so I'll start over at another park or I'll buy a small home or condo," she said.

Windward Communities did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Steep rent increases can be particularly burdensome for mobile home park residents because many are retired, low-income or disabled. And if someone can no longer afford the rent, it can be tricky to move because mobile home park residents own the house but rent the land.

**Related:** [Michigan mobile home park residents feel stuck as rents climb](#)

Paul Terranova, Midwest community organizer for advocacy group MHAAction, says the private equity model selects “folks who are vulnerable, who have fewer resources and are on some level trapped and cannot move their homes.”

It can cost thousands of dollars to move a manufactured house, and some aging homes would fall apart if relocated.

“It’s really hitting people really hard who have the least,” Terranova said.

As private equity and corporate owners snap up more mobile home parks across Michigan, some advocates are now pushing a package of bills to update the state’s manufactured housing law.

Senate Bills [486-492](#) would only allow “justifiable” rent increases, require leases and update licensing standards. The legislation would also close a loophole in oversight of drinking water at parks as some residents rely on bottled water.

The Senate Committee on Housing and Human Services advanced the bills this week to be considered by the full Senate.

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# Are tiny houses a solution to expensive starter homes? Ottawa County pilot is taking a look

Updated: Jun. 03, 2024, 3:33 p.m. | Published: Jun. 03, 2024, 3:28 p.m.



With many prospective first-time homebuyers being priced out in Ottawa County, officials are looking at a possible solution: tiny houses. (MLive file photo) MLive File Photo



By **Michael Kransz** | [mkransz@mlive.com](mailto:mkransz@mlive.com)

OTTAWA COUNTY, MI – With many prospective first-time homebuyers being priced out in Ottawa County, officials are looking at a possible solution: tiny houses.

The Ottawa County Housing Commission is exploring a plan to work with a developer to construct a tiny house or a neighborhood of tiny homes with the goal of dispelling misconceptions about the housing type and creating an affordable home production model that can be scaled to communities around the county.

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“Getting this type of housing product available and tangible for people to experience and see and feel is the next big step to help to allay any concerns or misconceptions about small home types,” said Paul Sachs, director of the Ottawa County Department of Strategic Impact.

“They are for working professionals. They are for aging seniors. This is not low-income housing; It’s a completely different housing product.”

The aim of the pilot is to gauge and build support around homes under 1,000 square feet that can be constructed without government subsidies and then help increase the supply of these affordable starter homes that the county is currently missing.

The Ottawa County Housing Commission is tasked with addressing housing needs of Ottawa County residents.

The idea for constructing smaller footprint homes came about as a possible solution to rising housing costs and what the commission says is an “ongoing housing crisis.” The average sale price of a home is around \$400,000, and commission members say that’s more than double what most residents can afford.

Members of the county’s housing commission are appointed by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.

Sachs said the standard American home is around 2,800 square feet on average and has been increasing in size for many years. At under 1,000 square feet, tiny homes could provide a practical and affordable solution to meet residents' needs, he said.

"I've toured several microhome dwellings that are absolutely stunning at both 600 square feet and 350 square feet; you'd be amazed the potential (these have) for emerging young professionals and aging seniors," Sachs said. "My first house in Ottawa County was an adorable, less than 1,000-square-foot single family home. I want my employees, friends, my friends' kids to all have that opportunity too; it just doesn't exist anymore."

Under the pilot plan, Sachs' department and the Ottawa County Housing Commission won't be contracting with the developer, funding the construction or be involved in the sales of the homes.

Instead, the Ottawa County Housing Commission will act more as a research and advocacy arm. They'll first be gauging and building support for this housing type as well as partnering on creating several tiny house designs that are affordable and can be built without tax subsidies.

Part of the plan includes working with local government leaders on overcoming zoning and policy barriers that impact home costs and the ability to construct these smaller footprint homes.

The housing commission would then work with a developer and provide them with those designs for the construction of one, several or a full neighborhood of tiny houses in a willing municipality or township to demonstrate the financial viability and benefit of the housing type.

"If everything goes to plan, it would be a wonderful opportunity for our communities to put a shovel in the ground with this concept by next year," Sachs said.

Jared Schuitema, a local realtor and vice president of the Ottawa County Housing Commission, said it's a common misconception that smaller homes translate to lower property values in the surrounding areas.

“We need to reverse our thinking on this. We need housing stock for the most amount of demand, and that’s folks working in Ottawa County,” Schuitema said. “The MicroHomes project provides an opportunity for home ownership to build equity and grow their financial freedom to realize the American Dream.”

Nick Rolinski, a Holland-based designer, has signed up to help the Ottawa County Housing Commission with the project.

“MicroHomes, if done correctly, can not only be architecturally appealing but also functional, enduring, and harmonious within the existing fabric of a community and local neighborhood,” Rolinski said. “The Ottawa County Housing Commission’s goal of operating without reliance on state or federal subsidies is lofty but healthy, and worth exploring in the spirit of expanding our local wherewithal to respond to housing crisis.”

People can learn more about this project and others by the Ottawa County Housing Commission [at this link](#).

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# ‘You can’t afford to live.’ More than half of Michigan renters struggle to pay rent

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The latest Michigan Statewide Housing Needs Assessment found more than half of Michigan renters are struggling to afford housing costs. (Photo by Rose White | MLive)





By **Rose White | [rwhite@mlive.com](mailto:rwhite@mlive.com)**

Katrina Thompson has been stretching dollars to make ends meet ever since her rent jumped from \$850 to \$1,200 two years ago.

Thompson, 39, works full-time at a nonprofit that supports people with physical and mental disabilities. Her husband works seven days a week at two jobs, earning extra cash bussing tables at Olive Garden. But they still struggle to afford a Holland duplex for them and their four children.

“People aren’t making the money they used to make, and the cost of living, especially the housing market has gone up so crazy that they make it basically you can’t afford to live,” Thompson said. “All we do is work and pay bills. That’s it.”

The Thompsons aren’t the only family wrestling with housing costs.

The latest [Michigan Statewide Housing Needs Assessment](#) details the numbers behind the state’s housing crisis in a 39-page report. It reveals a complex web of issues: supply, demand and affordability.

**Related:** [Michigan needs 190,000 more housing units to curb a crisis](#)

“The housing market in Michigan is still very much impacted by post-COVID conditions, which makes it difficult for all Michigan residents to find stable shelter and find good, stable housing conditions,” said David Allen, manager of the Office of Market Research for the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

Allen teamed up with University of Michigan researchers to publish the housing needs assessment– the first one since 2019.

## ***‘Crazy expensive’ housing costs***

The report found that 51% of Michigan renters are cost burdened, meaning they’re paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs. That’s up from the 45% estimated five years ago. With 1.1 million renter households in Michigan, that means more than 550,000 are paying too much for housing.

This is more acute for low-income renters, with 88% of those earning under \$20,000 a year struggling to afford housing costs. And the stress extends to homeowners: 34% with mortgages and 21% without mortgages are considered overburdened or severely overburdened.

Melika Belhaj, a researcher from University of Michigan's Housing Solutions for Health Equity, says these "startling numbers" reveal an affordability issue.

"It's not necessarily that we don't have the supply, or in other words that we don't have the houses, the apartments or the places where people can live, it's that those places might not be attainable especially for the lowest income folks in our state," she said.

In Michigan, where the minimum wage is \$10.33, renters need to earn \$17.28 an hour to afford a one-bedroom apartment and \$21.65 to afford a two-bedroom at fair market rates, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. Put another way, renters need roughly \$45,000 a year to afford a two-bedroom apartment, the coalition found, but nearly 500,000 Michigan households are earning below that.

"That housing affordability issue is definitely linked to a lack of income growth, particularly for low-income folks and folks who are making the minimum wage in Michigan," Belhaj said.

**Related:** Michigan's double-digit rent increase ranks third highest in the nation

Michigan rents have jumped nearly 10% in the past year hitting a median of \$1,492 a month, according to analysis from Rent.com. Meanwhile over a decade, median home values have risen 50% to \$224,400, which puts homeownership out of reach for more people.

"That in turn affects the rental supply, making less units available for folks who would ordinarily rent, but they are finding it hard to locate units they can afford," Allen said.

Renters tend to face the brunt of affordability issues because they earn about half the median income of homeowners, \$39,000 compared to \$80,000. And the report shows racial inequities among homeownership with 79% of white households being owners versus 45% of Black households.

Belhaj says cost-burdened households often must make difficult decisions about what to spend their remaining income on.

“Some people have to choose groceries over medications, or groceries over medical care, or childcare services over medical care,” she said. “And so, it puts people in a difficult situation where they might have to make difficult choices between things that are all very important for their well-being.”

For Thompson’s family, there’s no money for anything extra.

Thompson moved into the Holland duplex eight years ago after living homeless as a single mother in a campground with her children. Even while working two jobs, it was tough to scrape up enough money for a deposit on top of her other costs of living.

“We finally found some security and now we’re scared to leave because anywhere else is just crazy expensive,” she said.

### ***‘Build, baby, build.’***

Housing supply is part of the affordability puzzle.

The number of Michigan’s housing units ticked up by 1.8% over a decade, the report found, but this number “does not necessarily indicate that all people have access to stable and affordable housing.” Other factors can affect supply like seasonal housing, poor conditions and the state’s aging housing stock.

“I think the major findings in the statewide housing needs assessment really underline the need for increased unit output,” Allen said.

To curb this crisis, Michigan recently upped its housing goal.

The original plan was to build or rehab 75,000 housing units over five years, but Gov. Gretchen Whitmer raised the target last week to 115,000 units by September 2026. Nearly 50,000 units have been built, rehabbed or permitted to date.

“The rent is too damn high, and we don’t have enough damn housing,” Whitmer said at her State of the State speech in January. “Our response will be simple: build, baby, build.”

The state has also funneled \$110 million into building nearly 1,500 homes for middle-class families and \$5 million to help local governments to create more housing-friendly policies. Grand Rapids, for example, [recently approved zoning changes](#) to make it easier to build multifamily housing.



Building permits show there's growing demand for multifamily housing, according to the report. Although 70% of permits were for single-family homes in 2022, permits for multifamily developments, like apartment buildings, have increased fourfold to 30%.

"I think things are improving slowly. I think there's still a lot more room to do stuff," Allen said.

**Related:** [Key findings of MLive's reporting on Ann Arbor's affordability problem](#)

Outside of boosting supply, some advocates are pushing a package of bills deemed the "renters bill of rights." A few pieces of the legislation include [preventing landlords](#) from discriminating against tenants based on income, giving tenants facing eviction [the right to counsel](#) and [overturning a statewide ban](#) on local rent control.

Will Lawrence, a coordinator for the Rent is Too Damn High – a tenants group supporting the bills – says renters are burdened with costs on "various fronts" and that's showing up in the data.

"It's no surprise given that renters really have no protections against rent hikes, against fees and fines from their landlords, and they're also not guaranteed the right to repair their own home in which they live," he said.

The needs assessment did highlight one positive development in Michigan's housing landscape.

Tax foreclosures have plummeted 81% since the height of crisis when tens of thousands of homes were foreclosed in 2015. There were just over 7,000 forecloses in 2021 compared to more than 38,000 six years prior.

"A good thing that's happening for people to be able to stay in their homes," Belhaj said.

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## REAL-ESTATE

# 99-unit condo development moves forward in Holland Township

**Austin Metz**

Holland Sentinel

Published 3:36 a.m. ET June 10, 2024 | Updated 3:36 a.m. ET June 10, 2024

HOLLAND TWP. — After years of back and forth with Holland Township, a new 99-unit condominium development is moving forward.

Smithfield Condominiums is planned for 120th Avenue south of Quincy Street, on just under 22 acres of land.

The proposal was originally brought before the Holland Township Planning Commission in October 2022, when representatives requested to convert the land from AG Agriculture to R-2 Medium Density Residential.

At the time, representatives also requested approval of the project's PUD — but were met with opposition from locals, many whom questioned how the development would impact the local flow of traffic.

The request was tabled so the applicant could work to find solutions.

In February 2023, representatives returned after reworking the plan, increasing the development by eight units and adding a full public road system. The planning commission voted to approve the preliminary request, but not the final approval.

Finally, on Tuesday, representatives proposed a two-phase development, this time with 99 attached single-family units on 21.8 acres of land.

According to Community Development Director Corey Broersma, the commission recommended final PUD approval of the project to the Holland Township Board of Trustees, contingent on a number of changes.

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“Once the revisited plans are received and approved by staff, an approval resolution can be sent to the (board) for consideration at a public hearing,” Broersma wrote in an email. “If approved by the

(board), then the project may proceed with securing their building permits.”

Developers said they're ready to start phase one immediately, followed by the second phase in two or three years.

— *Contact reporter Austin Metz at [ametz@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:ametz@hollandsentinel.com).*

## Second HõM Flats project in breaks ground

**Austin Metz**

Holland Sentinel | USA TODAY NETWORK

HOLLAND — Construction on a long-planned multi-family housing development in Holland broke ground Thursday, June 6, marking the start of a \$60 million, 202-apartment project.

The three-building community — HõM Flats at 24 East — will include one, two and three bedroom apartments, 13,000-square-feet of retail space, an on-site childcare center, and suites reserved for local business.

The project comes from affordable housing developer Magnus Capital Partners, based in Wyoming, Michigan. The developer is also responsible for HõM Flats complexes on Felch Street in Holland Township, “28 West” in Wyoming and another coming soon in Grand Rapids.

Planning for the project dates back to before 2021. In June 2023, the company received approval from the Holland Township Planning Commission for the addition of the childcare center.

The development at 24th Street and Waverly Road will now include an 8,800-square-foot childcare center to be used by residents and members of the community.

According to renderings, the center will include several classrooms, a playroom and office, a lobby, and storage space. The development will also have a dog park, walking paths, a fitness center, a playground, pickleball courts, a community room and more.

“HõM Flats at 24 East will directly reflect the needs of this thriving community for better rental

housing matched to best-in- class amenities,” Magnus CEO Vishal Arora wrote in a release.

“We hope this innovative formula will appeal to the existing workforce, as well as attract newly hired talent looking to relocate to the area.”

Arora cited the ongoing housing shortage in West Michigan and beyond.

“We’re proud to be part of the solution to this national housing crisis,” Arora said. “ There is tremendous need for this type of workforce housing in — and beyond — Holland. Access to high- quality, stable housing at all price points is central to the health and wellbeing of everyone.”

Leasing for HõM Flats at 24 East is expected to begin in 2026.

— *Contact reporter Austin Metz at [ametz@hollandsentinel.com](mailto:ametz@hollandsentinel.com).*



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# Michigan's 'extremely lax' mobile home law could get first overhaul since 1987

Updated: Jul. 02, 2024, 8:55 a.m. | Published: Jul. 02, 2024, 8:42 a.m.



A package of bills that would overhaul Michigan's mobile home park cleared the Housing and Human Services Committee in June 2024. (Sarahbeth Maney | MLive.com) Sarahbeth Maney | MLive.com



By **Rose White | rwhite@mlive.com**

Holly Hook told lawmakers earlier this year she feels trapped by rising rents.

While testifying before the Housing and Human Services Committee in February, Hook said her lot rent at a Swartz Creek mobile home park has more than doubled in the past six years. It jumped 25% after the park was purchased by new owners in 2018, she said, and has ticked up at least 10% every year since then.

“We live in dread of the next rent increase and I’m personally terrified of checking the mail,” she said.

A package of Senate Bills 486-490 could address this by overhauling Michigan’s mobile home park law for the first time since 1987. The bills cleared a hurdle last month when they passed through committee with an 8-3 vote and are now headed to the Senate for a vote.

“We have laws that haven’t been updated in any sort of major fashion since the 1980s, so we’re ripe for people to come in (and) take advantage of folks,” said Sen. John Cherry, D-Flint, a co-sponsor of the legislation.

**Related:** ‘Price-fixing cartel’: Big Michigan mobile home park owners accused of conspiracy

While there’s agreement the law needs reform, opinion is split on the best approach.

The Michigan Manufactured Housing Association – an industry group that represents park owners, manufacturers and transporters – is pushing back on some aspects of the Senate bills. The group, however, backs another package of mobile home park legislation introduced in the House.

“There’s a lot of provisions in here that the association supports, but there’s some that we firmly believe will have the opposite impact of what’s intended,” said John Lindley, president of the Michigan Manufactured Housing Association.

Here are some of the key parts of the Senate bills:

### ***‘Extremely lax’ licensing rules***

Licensing is big part of the legislation.

There are 1,033 licensed mobile home parks throughout the state, according to Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. Seventy-six parks did not renew their most recent license and an unknown number are operating unlicensed.

Under the proposal, a park owner that does not have a current license would not be able to collect rent. The state would also have to create a way for the public to report potentially unlicensed park owners, and it would allow LARA to employ “an appropriate number” of employees to enforce the law. Unlicensed parks could be fined up to \$100,000.

It would also lower the term of a license from three years to one and increase licensing fees.

“What it does is strengthen the licensing requirements for manufactured housing communities in Michigan, which are extremely lax right now,” Cherry said.

**Related:** A hedge fund bought Michigan mobile home parks. Things fell apart.

## ***‘Justifiable’ rent increases***

Climbing rents have been a big concern for mobile home park residents.

In recent years, some have said their lot rent jumped and extra fees were tacked on when their parks got bought by new owners. Rapid cost increases can be particularly challenging for mobile home park tenants, who are often low-income, retired or disabled, because they own their home but rent the land.

“This leaves us trapped as we can’t move nearly as easily as other renters,” Hook told lawmakers. “There’s no free market when residents are trapped. And if we get priced out, we can’t move or sell our homes.”

**Related:** Michigan mobile home park residents feel stuck as rents climb

Under the proposed legislation, the state would have to approve any “unjustifiable rent increase” that exceeds the inflation rate. The bills would also prohibit an owner from “deceptive methods” like charging extra for utilities or unrelated fees.

“People should be able to raise rents as costs go up and stuff like that, make a decent rate of return,” Cherry said. “But we just need to make sure we’re getting rid of the gouging that has started to exist in this space.”

But this provision is a big hang-up for members of the Michigan Manufactured Housing Association. Lindley said it could worsen the state’s housing shortage and create unintended consequences like park owners making cuts to other services like snow removal, pool maintenance and sidewalk improvements.

“Michigan has a well-documented housing affordability crisis and housing supply crisis,” Lindley said. “While we’re facing these issues, a proposal like this could be devastating to the supply.”

Mobile home parks would also be required under the bills to provide a minimum lease of one year to residents.

## ***A database of owners***

If the bills pass, Michigan would be required to create a public database of mobile home park ownership and licensing.

This type of database would shed light on who exactly has purchased parks throughout the state in recent years. Ownership can be tricky to pinpoint because some corporate groups will create individual LLCs for each park they buy.

An MLive analysis of state data found that nearly half of the 1,033 licensed mobile home parks are operated by investment groups or owners with five or more communities. And about one in 10 mobile home parks in Michigan are owned by private equity firms, according to watchdog group the Private Equity Stakeholder Project.

**Related:** As private equity buys up mobile home parks, Michigan ranks second highest

Cherry says Michigan’s outdated laws have allowed “bad actors” to move in and take advantage of people living in manufactured housing.

“These private equity firms have realized that folks don’t have the ability to change where they’re living without giving up an asset they spent tens of thousands of dollars on,” he said.

## ***Increased oversight***

The proposed legislation would also tighten oversight by broadening LARA’s enforcement of mobile home parks.

The current laws are “not effective,” according to Cherry.

“What it does is make sure that the department has the ability to enforce all these requirements, and enforce rules and regulations as well, which has been a challenge for a very long time here in Michigan,” he said.

Some aspects include prescribing the process for LARA to identify unlicensed park owners and allowing the state agency to partner with local governments to do inspections. Drinking water is another key issue for residents who say they rely on bottled water instead of drinking what flows from the tap.



At a February committee hearing, Pamela Maxey, a Kalamazoo County mobile home park resident, set a jug of brown water from another park on the podium as she told lawmakers there's "serious questions about the quality of our water."

"Most of us just don't drink it," she said. "We pay for this water that we don't drink then go out and buy water that we can drink."

**Related:** Mobile home residents would rather pay for bottled water than trust the tap

Under the current law, the Michigan Department of Environment and Great Lakes enforces the state's Safe Drinking Water Act for the public water supply. But customer site piping, a common source of water for mobile home parks and apartment complexes, is not currently considered a public water supply.

The bills would give EGLE the authority to "promulgate rules" regarding water supply, sewage and disposal.

From the industry's perspective, Lindley says state agencies should focus on enforcing the rules that are currently on the books before the state creates a new regulatory framework. He said residents like Maxey are "being failed by those who are charged with regulating them."

## What's next?

A similar set of bills was introduced three years ago but died in session after being OK'd by House.

This time around the legislation is heading to a Senate vote after passing through committee. The other package, HBs 4886-89, has not cleared the Committee on Regulatory Reform yet. Cherry plans to push for the Senate to vote on the bills after legislators return from a summer break.

"What we'll see is securing what tends to be a very natural supply of affordable housing," he said. "As opposed to right now, that supply of affordable housing is really getting squeezed."

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