



Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin

Advocating for Sustainable Rental Housing

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Advocating for Sustainable Rental Housing

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- 12:00 PM - Registration and Lunch
- 1:00 PM - Tee Off
- 4:00 PM -Happy Hour, Networking and Awards

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"The Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin is your primary resource for education, mutual support and legislative advocacy for the successful ownership and management of the rental property."

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Milwaukee Rental Households Deal with Rising Rent Costs

By Christine Hatfield, WPR

Rent prices are up in the Milwaukee metro area, according to a recent report. A researcher says it's worsening issues of inequality.

A report from the financial app Stessa found median rents in the Milwaukee-Waukesha area have gone up by around \$100 since 2019. And in an area like Milwaukee County, which is renter-majority, that can have a big impact.

According to a 2018 Wisconsin Policy Forum report based on Census Bureau data, 50.6 percent of the area's households at the time rented rather than owned their homes.

Yaidi Cancel Martinez, a social scientist with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Center for Economic Development, said low rental availability and increased demand have both potentially driven up prices. Low home supplies and increasing home prices also play a role.

"That is putting some potential buyers to stay a little bit longer in the rental market, so that then can constrain that supply," Martinez said. "People are staying a little bit longer (whether they) want to stay longer in the rental market or they have to."

Inflation and increased costs of living are also making a difference, especially for the area's marginalized and low-earning households. Martinez's research finds incomes haven't kept up with the cost of rent in the region.

"For ... moderate and low income households, there's still a lot of stress, you know, in terms of affording their home and trying to afford other things as well," Martinez said.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

'No greater crisis'

Where help exists, it often only goes so far. Andy Heidt, the housing policy and programs manager for the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association, or WISCAP, said the Wisconsin Emergency Rent Assistance program has an eligibility limit of 18 months.

He said rent assistance is "both easy and hard." According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, more than 187,000 renter households in Wisconsin are extremely low income.

"There's no greater crisis," Heidt said. "Keeping people stable in their homes is essential to everything in terms of being foundational."

Heidt said different landlords are resolving issues with tenants in different ways.

"There are definitely landlords with empathy and understanding," Heidt said. "They know their tenants, they're taking chances on their tenants, they'll wait for their tenants who are in a temporary crisis to navigate the support and services to hopefully be able to stay in their units ... you flip the coin over, and there's the rapacity, greed, turmoil, intention that informs so many aspects of our life in this day and age."

Martinez said systemic solutions depend on creating a better supply of affordable homes, as well as ensuring wages keep up with the cost of living.

"Housing is a basic human right," Martinez said. "When we're trying to ensure that we can pay for rent or pay for our home, it's very important."

Heidt said WISCAP is engaging in work to help people stay in their homes in the short term while creating a better stock of affordable housing across the state.

"We've got our hands full," Heidt said. "We're really scared, because as we come out of this pandemic, the rents are so much higher."

Heidt said reckoning with income inequality and ensuring the availability of stable housing will also help ease the troubles marginalized groups face.

"The challenges are like climbing Mount Everest without any equipment," Heidt said.

Within Milwaukee County, rent trends can vary from city to city.

In Milwaukee proper, data from rent.com shows rent prices down from last year to this year, with the decline varying from 4 percent for studio apartments to as much as 24 percent for a three-bedroom apartment. Meanwhile, suburban areas have seen some average rents rise dramatically. According to rent.com's data, average studio rents in Wauwatosa have risen by almost 90 percent year-to-year.

But Martinez cautions those sorts of reports should be taken with a grain of salt.

"They base the prices and the research on their listings," Martinez said. "It's not capturing the whole picture of the rental market."

Martinez said she doesn't expect rent prices to increase at "an exorbitant pace" in the near future.

"Overall, I don't foresee this being a gloomy future for renters," Martinez said. "Things might get a little bit more expensive, but really not that much."

Heidt said there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to reckoning with housing issues.

"We have to be bold, innovative, collaborative and not afraid to change if what we're doing isn't working," Heidt said. "If we fail, we learn from those failures, get up and try something else that has to work for these households, because the stakes are too high."



Why rent prices are rising in Milwaukee

By Mallory Cheng, Kobe Brown, www.wuwm.com

About half of Milwaukee County renters are rent-burdened, according to the Wisconsin Policy Forum. That means they spend at least 30% of their income on rent. Rent prices are continuing to rise in the Milwaukee area, while the state's minimum wage stays at \$7.25 an hour.

Yaidi Cancel Martinez is an associate scientist at the Center for Economic Development and works in the department of urban planning at UW-Milwaukee. She explains why rent prices are rising and how it will affect the quality of life for people in Milwaukee.

"If people are looking to rent a unit, they're gonna see that the price is going up," she states. In Martinez's research, she looked at new rental listings in the Milwaukee metro area to calculate the average cost of the rent. She found for a one-bedroom apartment the average cost of rent is around \$1,300 to \$1,500 a month.

"That, of course, varies, in terms of the size, in terms of the square footage, the number of bedrooms, and also the location," says Martinez. She explains that there are multiple factors causing the cost of rent to go up. One of them is the number of low rental vacancies in the area.

Martinez explains that when the housing market has a rental vacancy between 4% and 6%, it is a sign that the market is in good shape. Now, the housing market is seeing rental vacancy at a rate of 1.5% to 3.5%. This means that the rental market is tight.

Compared to neighboring cities, like Racine, Milwaukee's rent prices are slightly higher. But compared to Madison, rent is slightly lower. She also says that compared to other Midwest cities, like the Twin Cities and Chicago, Milwaukee is slightly lower.

However, she adds that she doesn't expect the cost of rent to increase enormously over the next few months or so because other basic costs are also rising.

"If we add on the cost of transportation, the cost of food and other things that are necessities, basic necessities, that can put a lot of strain onto individuals and families, especially those with low and moderate incomes. So definitely this is quite a concern," says Martinez.

Continued on page 5

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Continued from page 5

Martinez says because wages have remained stagnant, it's made affording rent difficult.

"Wages haven't kept up with the rising cost of housing in the past years. So, this is something we have to address the wage situation in our area to try to improve conditions for individuals and their families, and households in general," Martinez says.

Could Affordable Housing Reduce City's Racial Disparities?

By Henry Redman, Wisconsin Examiner,
www.urbanmilwaukee.com

Historic racism, state-level meddling, and decade-long trends have combined to severely harm the state of affordable housing in Milwaukee. To solve it, a citywide and long-term plan is required, according to Teig Whaley-Smith, the chief alliance officer at the Community Development Alliance and a former Milwaukee County official.

Whaley-Smith spoke Tuesday at a meeting of the Milwaukee Rotary Club about what is needed to reduce racial disparities in homeownership in the city, a problem with branches that extend from the health and education of children to the area's economic strength.

"These problems have been created over centuries and we are not going to solve them overnight," he said. "But it's important that we do it together to make progress, and why start with housing? So there are hospital representatives in the room, public safety folks, people in economic development and running your own business and work on employment.

And it turns out that housing is deeply attached to all of those other social determinants of health. And we're understanding this more and more through some really recent research. For example, in education, kids that come from families that are in stable housing, have a 20-30% lower dropout rate. That's huge."

The Community Development Alliance, along with other organizations in the Milwaukee area, has developed a strategic plan to increase homeownership rates among Black and Latino residents and increase housing affordability for Milwaukeeans earning \$7-15 per hour — highlighting the generational wealth that can be created by homeownership.

Part of the problem, Whaley-Smith said, is that new homes have not been built at the rate they were in the past. In the middle of the 20th century, government programs and a growing city combined to build thousands of new homes per year, but because of racist laws and practices against minority homeownership, they were largely built for white residents.

In 1968, the Fair Housing Act was passed, but the rate of new home construction cratered.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Now, the existing home stock in Milwaukee is being scooped up by investors rather than families, Whaley-Smith said. Part of the strategic plan is raising an \$11 million fund to compete with these buyers and instead sell them to residents.

"We have lost 20% of the homeowners and Black communities in Milwaukee over the last 10 years," he said. "This is really devastating, it's largely through a practice that we refer to as predatory acquisition, where people are coming into neighborhoods and buying up properties that were built for homeowners, homeowners like my grandfather, and instead of selling them to families of color, they're being bought by investors."

The group's review of home-sale data found that among single-family Milwaukee homes priced at \$100,000 to \$125,000, "50% that were built for homeowners are now owned by investors," he said. "So we need to switch this trend."

Whaley-Smith focused on homeownership, but he added that there is a severe shortage of affordable rental homes in Milwaukee: while 75,000 families in the city make less than \$15 an hour, there are only 43,000 rental homes available for them.

He also criticized the state government and the Republican majority in the Legislature, which contains a large number of landlords, for blocking Milwaukee's attempts to improve these issues.

For example, the city attempted to require a person buying a rental property to bring the building up to code — only to have the Legislature pass a law preventing that.

"The city of Milwaukee did do something about that, and the state of Wisconsin preempted it," Whaley-Smith said. "About five years ago the City Council passed a new rule that if you were to buy the property and turn it into a rental, that you had to bring it up to code compliance, you know, within a certain time period. And then the state Legislature came in and said you can no longer do that."

The city also tried to pass a zoning measure that would allow more types of buildings to be constructed, rather than more common zoning rules that restrict things like building height, square footage, and how far from the street a home must be — which pushes home construction toward the larger homes more often seen in the suburbs.

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Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

“The City of Milwaukee passed what’s called inclusionary zoning,” he said. “So remember when I said that suburban communities have zoned things to require really big properties? We now refer to that as exclusionary zoning: you’re excluding people that can’t build that big house,” Whaley-Smith said. “So the City of Milwaukee actually passed inclusionary zoning because they have to be inclusive and what happened you know, as a pattern here, the state of Wisconsin preempted it.”

The measure was prevented by state law and a 2006 state Supreme Court ruling.

“So that’s why collective action is really important because this impacts everybody in this room,” he continued. “The homeownership rates in Milwaukee have gone down over 10% in the last decade, and it’s not happening in white neighborhoods.

And so if we want to keep the homeownership rate up, which benefits everybody in your businesses in this room, we need to change that. So the answer is yes, the City of Milwaukee continues to work on trying to thread that needle, but a lot of this is governed by the state.”

AASEW Assisted Legislative Changes

By Dawn Anastasi, AASEW Board Member

In the article, Teig Whaley-Smith stated: *“About five years ago the City Council passed a new rule that if you were to buy the property and turn it into a rental, that you had to bring it up to code compliance, you know, within a certain time period. And then the state Legislature came in and said you can no longer do that.”*

Since 1975, the AASEW has been at the forefront of state decision-making on legislative policies that impact rental housing, advocating for both the good landlord and the good tenant.

The AASEW did assist in the following legislative changes:

- Prohibits rental property inspections except upon a complaint or as part of a program of regularly scheduled inspections conducted in compliance with state or federal law.
- Retains the Milwaukee Property Recording Ordinance, but limits the ability to charge a fee.

- Dramatically changed the “Re-Inspection Fee” by limiting the fee ceiling as well as allowing fees only when there was an actual, physical inspection. Previously, these fees doubled every 30 days until they were six times the original fee, plus often there was no actual inspection associated with the fee. The fees imposed upon these properties made it harder for someone to buy the property and put it back in service.”
- Prohibits rental property certification or licensing unless the requirement applies uniformly to all residential rental property owners, including owners of owner-occupied rental property.
- Prohibits an occupancy or transfer of tenancy fee on a rental unit.
- Prohibits municipal ordinances that restrict a tenant’s responsibility or a landlord’s right to recover for damages, waste to or neglect of the premises, or for any other costs, expenses, fees, payments, or damages for which the tenant is responsible under the lease or state laws.
- Prohibits ordinances requiring a landlord to provide tenants any information that is not required to be provided under federal or state laws. There is an exception for ordinances that have a “reasonable and defined objective of regulating the manufacturing of illegal narcotics.”
- Prohibits ordinances requiring a landlord to provide any information to the municipality about the tenant or landlord unless it is required by federal or state law except contact info for the owner or agent.
- Cities and counties cannot pass or enforce eviction moratoriums.

This is just a small sampling of the ways that the AASEW is working on behalf of all rental property owners in Wisconsin.

Please visit our website to read a brief outline of some of the Association’s legislative efforts:

www.aasew.org/Legislation

For more detailed information on these laws please attend our general meetings or consider attending Attorney Tristan Pettit’s AASEW Landlord Boot Camp.

Back to Basics – Service of the Notice Terminating Tenancy

by Attorney Gary D. Koch of Petrie + Pettit S.C.

Unfortunately, landlords sometimes find themselves in the situation where they have to terminate the tenancy of a residential tenant. There are a variety of notices that can be used to do so, and that is a topic for another day. This post is on how to serve a notice terminating tenancy.

Wisconsin Statute §704.21 delineates the methods by which a landlord can serve a notice on a tenant. Among the options are personal service, substitute service, posting and mailing after diligent attempts at personal or substitute service, sending certified or registered mail, or by any other method authorized by Wis. Stat. §801.11 for service of a summons. For most landlords, the most effective means of service of the notice is via certified or registered mail.

Wis. Stat. §704.21(1)(d) authorizes service of the notice terminating tenancy by “mailing a copy of the notice by registered or certified mail to the tenant’s last-known address.”

There is no requirement that the tenant actually receive the notice, simply that the landlord mail the notice via certified or registered mail to the tenant’s last-known address.

Most landlords opt to wait the extra two days (see Wis. Stat. §704.19(7)) required for the certified / registered mail service because “I never received the notice” is not a defense to service under this section.

The notice need only to have been sent via certified or registered mail to the tenant’s last-known address.

Furthermore, with the 2017 amendments to the eviction statutes (via 2017 Wisconsin Act 317), the Wisconsin Legislature created Wis. Stat. § 799.40(1)(g), which provides that if a landlord serves a notice terminating tenancy via certified or registered mail, that *“proof of certified mailing from the United States post office shall be sufficient to establish that proper notice has been provided*

Continued on page 9



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Continued from page 8

for the purpose of filing a complaint or otherwise demonstrating that proper notice has been given in an eviction action, and an affidavit of service may not be requested to establish that proper notice has been provided."

It is clear that the Wisconsin Legislature supports (arguably even encourages) service of notices terminating tenancy via certified or registered mail.

With all of this said, if a tenant does not actually receive the notice, though, the action specified in the notice is unlikely to occur.

For example, if a tenant owes rent but never receives the notice sent via certified mail, the tenant is less likely to pay the outstanding rent owed than if the tenant had actually received the notice. Because landlords want the tenant to get the notice and perform accordingly, many landlords also send a copy of the notice via First Class U.S. Mail, as well.

THIS IS NOT A REQUIREMENT OF THE STATUTES FOR PROPER SERVICE, but rather helps foster communication between landlords and tenants. It is often much less burdensome for all if the tenant actually receives the notice and performs accordingly, rather than having to move forward with an eviction.

If you have an instance where you are required to serve notice, it is important to do it properly. Petrie + Pettit can certainly help ensure compliance. Feel free to reach out to us!



We Energies bills may increase; energy emergency possible; no rolling blackouts planned

By Jason Calvi, FOX6 News

Like the temperature, the price of just about everything is going up – and it is expected to be a very expensive summer, with one group warning of a possible energy emergency, and another warning about possible power outages.

The latest Consumer Price Index shows natural gas is more than 22% higher than it was last year. That natural gas fuels much of your power in Wisconsin.

Some people may notice their We Energies budget billing is going up for the first time in years. For example, one of the bills we reviewed had been steady from year to year at \$138 a month. Now, it's going up to \$173.

We Energies says it is the result of a cold winter and surging natural gas prices. "We spoke a lot about that as early as last fall, telling people that natural gas prices are up, that's the biggest part of your heating bill is the price of natural gas, that has nothing to do with us, we get no profit on that," said Brendan Conway of We Energies.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) estimates costs will be up by large amounts this summer.

"Wholesale electric markets expect to see higher prices this summer because of hotter temperatures, slightly increased demand, and higher natural gas prices. As of May 13, futures prices for some major U.S. electric price points are up over last year's settled prices by between 77% to 233%," a FERC memo outlined.

When the air conditioning kicks in or the lights flick on, the electric power used is part of a huge grid. The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) runs in 15 U.S. states, including Wisconsin, as well as the Canadian province of Manitoba. It extends from Canada down to Louisiana.

"As a grid operator, you're always cautious going into the summer, whether you've got a big reserve margin, or a small reserve margin," MISO's John Bear said May 20 during a media briefing with the U.S. Energy Association. "We've learned over time that if something can happen, it will happen, so we have to be prepared for all of those situations."

Continued on page 10



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Continued from page 9

J.T. Smith, MISO's executive director of market operations, said energy shortfalls could leave the north and central regions of MISO "at increased risk of temporary, controlled outages to preserve the integrity of the bulk electric system."

"In the short term, I am a little bit concerned, but not so much for the summer," said Bear.

We Energies is confident they are OK.

"We do not believe that there are going to be any significant issues this summer. We think we have enough energy to meet our customers' needs," Conway said.

"What they're saying is the reserve margin is tighter than they want. So they just sent out an alert, the alert was really for utilities to say do your work now on your equipment, so this thing should not be planned to be off in July and August. And it's not by the way."

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), a group that monitors power grids, said MISO "faces a capacity shortfall in its North and Central areas, resulting in high-risk of energy emergencies during peak summer conditions."

An energy emergency does not mean the lights will go out when usage surges. It is a procedural step that can lead to all kinds of things, like bringing in energy from other areas or the later possibility of asking customers to use less.

"We actually might, and this has never been done before, but the first step we would ever do is we would put a call out to our customers to simply reduce their usage," said Conway of options before they would go to what's known as a rolling blackouts or a brownout, where energy consumption surges past supply and the power company turns off portions of the power at staggered times and locations.

"For the last few decades, rolling blackouts have not been something here," added Conway. "We do not believe it's something we are going to see this summer."

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

A MISO spokesman, Brandon Morris, tells FOX6, "...this is not cause for panic and it does not mean the public should expect the lights to go out in the MISO region this summer.

There is increased likelihood that MISO will have to implement its emergency operating procedures – as mandated by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation – to keep the power flowing.

This might include importing energy from neighboring systems or deploying emergency-only resources. In the worst-case scenario, MISO may have to implement temporary, controlled power interruptions in order to prevent uncontrolled, cascading outages. Again, we have never taken this step in Wisconsin."

We Energies urges customers to take steps now that could lower their energy bill. That includes things like sealing cracks to keep out the hot air or tuning up your air conditioner.

Redevelopment of school into affordable housing on Milwaukee's north side hailed as exemplifying HUD initiative

By Talis Shelbourne, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

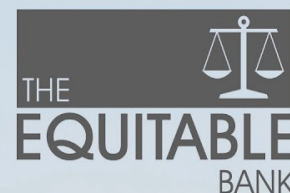
A newly constructed slate, white and rust-colored building on Milwaukee's near north side will now feature 82 units of affordable housing in place of the former Phillis Wheatley School.

The former school, at 2442 N. 20th St., was the location of a \$22 million redevelopment project utilizing low-income housing tax credits and \$400,000 in HUD funds through its HOME Investment Partnerships Program.

The site was purchased by Royal Capital Group Ltd. in April of last year, which pledged to provide most of its 82 units at below market rents for those earning 60% or less than the median income.

Continued on page 15


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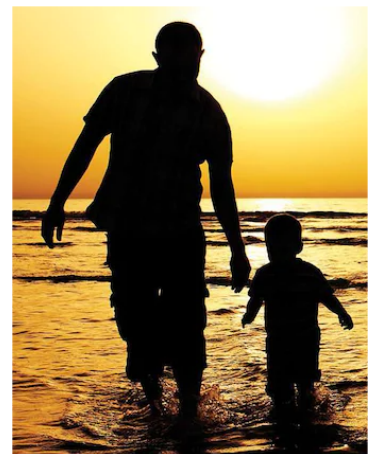
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AASEW OWNER Article Guidelines

Would you like to submit an article for publication in the AASEW newsletter?

Here are the current submission guidelines:

Deadline for all submissions is the first of each month.

The newsletter will be delivered electronically to the membership around the 10th of the month.

Limited print copies of the newsletter may be available at the General Membership Meeting following its publication.

We are happy to accept one article per author per newsletter. Please keep the article to approximately 500 words in length.

Any edits made to an article (generally for length) will be approved by the contributor before it is published.

All articles must be properly attributed.

The Editorial Staff reserves the right to select articles that serve the membership, are timely, and are appropriate.

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Continued from page 11

The Milwaukee-based Greenfire Management Services company is leading construction.

At an event touring the apartments, Midwest Regional Administrator Diane Shelley of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) commended the project, which she said exemplifies the kind that would be financially supported under the Biden-Harris Administration's Our Way Home initiative.

"We need more investments like the ones made here in the city's 53206 ZIP code," she said.

Shelley was joined by Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley and Mayor Cavalier Johnson, both of whom have identified safe, healthy and affordable housing as crucial elements to strong neighborhoods.

"We recognize that providing a foundation of housing is one of the main social determinants of health," Crowley said. "and we have continued to increase our investments in housing at the county level ranging from eviction prevention to rental assistance as well as homeless outreach."

Crowley went on to tout Milwaukee County's 92% reduction in homelessness since 2015, and rental assistance programs he said have prevented 11,000 evictions.

Shelley acknowledged the affordable housing shortage in Milwaukee, which is mirrored across many Midwestern cities: increasing rents and stagnating wages. "This demands our attention," she said. "This is a crisis."

With roughly \$160 million in affordable housing, community development, public housing authority and Indian housing block grants coming to the state, Wisconsin is poised to tackle its affordable housing shortage with an unprecedented influx of funds.

Construction to be completed in July

Greenfire Redevelopment Manager Terrell Walters led a tour throughout the building, pointing out some of the historical elements that have been preserved along with the modern amenities it will feature.

For example, many of the apartments will feature their original early 20th century window frames, with the same company that originally installed them, Marvin, providing new sashes and double-paned glass.

Continued on page 16

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Continued from page 15

Most of the apartments used to be classrooms. Now each unit will contain its own washer and dryer, furnace, dishwasher and central air. Units will also come with a guaranteed spot in the parking lot and storage locker.

The two buildings on the site will house a mix of market-rate and affordable rate units, with rents ranging from \$500-\$850 for a one-bedroom and \$600-\$1,300 for a three-bedroom.

Walters said Greenfire, like many other construction companies, has had to work through the country's supply chain issues. Wait times to receive the window pieces, for example, doubled from their normal average of 24 weeks to 40.

Despite that, construction is on track to be completed in July with a labor force Walters said has intentionally engaged local residents and promoted workforce development.

After construction is finished, Horizon Management Group is expected to take over property management.

The Our Way Home initiative was announced as part of HUD's 20th celebration of June as National Homeownership Month. The agency has since announced several priorities from its Housing Supply Action Plan, which included increasing the supply of affordable housing, advancing equity in home appraisals and strengthening the enforcement of fair housing and lending access.

Illegal dumping costing Milwaukee County thousands of dollars

By Courtney Sisk, WISN 12 News

Milwaukee County Parks executive director Guy Smith told WISN 12 News littering and illegal dumping have been issues in Milwaukee County for years.

But not like this.

Continued on page 17

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Continued from page 16

"I would say over the last year or six months especially it's gotten a lot worse," he said.

"And it's really taking away our staff time from prepping ball diamonds to mowing, and frankly it's costing the taxpayers a lot of money."

Smith said there are now nearly two dozen parks across the county that crews have to monitor and clean daily.

"We've had issues where contractors have dumped all their materials there. We've had issues where people who are moving out of their home, moving out of their apartment dumping stuff," he said.

"But we've had issues where we can't handle it ourselves because there's potentially medical waste or potentially other contamination, so we've had to hire contractors to do that work."

One job recently cost the county \$21,000.

"But that doesn't include some of the staff time that went into that," he said. "We've been definitely short-staffed this year, and so it's one of those things where it takes them away from other tasks."

Aside from the cost, it's also an eyesore and a burden on the environment.

"Parks are a quality of life. We all really crave that, and so when someone blemishes that it blemishes your experience," Smith said. "We need to be stewards of our parks and that takes all of us in the community."

To report illegal dumping click here:

city.milwaukee.gov/DumpingForm

You can receive a ticket for up to \$5,000 for illegal dumping, according to the county's website.

There are several legal options to dispose of waste listed on the Milwaukee Department of Public works website here.

Milwaukee County Parks are already searching for volunteers to help with clean-up efforts following the Fourth of July holiday.

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Legit landlords do exist. And Ihsan Atta is trying to prove it.

By PrincessSafiya Byers, Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service

Good landlords exist. Ihsan Atta, aware of a bevy of negative news about landlords emanating from coverage of the city's housing crisis – including a spate of evictions – wants people to know that.

His company, Opus Corporation, owns residential and commercial properties in the Riverwest neighborhood and surrounding areas.

Atta contacted News414, the joint project between NNS and the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism that uses innovative technology and research techniques to deliver crucial information to residents, with that in mind. NNS then contacted him.

His properties range from senior-based apartments to places where residents work with people with cognitive disabilities. They include the building that holds the George Floyd mural on North Holton Street and East North Avenue and the one that has a Brianna Taylor mural in the alley on North Holton and East Locust streets.

Mastering the 'nuances'

He said learning the culture of the neighborhoods where he owns property is one way he avoids trouble.

"Understanding the little nuances to each neighborhood makes it a little easier to handle issues that may arise," he said. "For example, if I know my tenant lost a family member: Understanding that it is a cultural practice to have a lot of visitors after death, it is easier to address when their neighbor calls me concerned about traffic in her building."

Atta said relationships matter. "Having a relationship with the people you are working with just makes things easier," he said. "Sometimes people are surprised to see the relationships I have with my tenants."

Mattie Mallott was one of those people. Mallott, 70, has been renting from Atta for the past 18 years and said she'd never had a landlord so professional and friendly.

"I rarely have problems, but when I do, I know it will be fixed quickly," she said. "I don't have to wait weeks or call Ihsan multiple times to get things handled." She said his professionalism is why she has rented from him for so long, but his friendly nature is the icing on the cake.

Continued on page 19



Continued from page 18

"He does things like getting us Christmas gifts every year," she said. "And when my husband passed four years ago, not only did he show up to the funeral, but he also reached out to see if I needed a decrease or assistance with rent because he knew we'd lost a second income."

Dorrian Malone, who has been renting from Atta for almost six years, shared Malott's appreciation for the landlord. "Ihsan is quick to handle any maintenance issue I might have," he said. "And he is always willing to be patient and work with me if I need it."

Atta said he is fortunate to have the capacity to extend grace to his tenants when they need it, but he understands that not all landlords can do that.

"I'm not a huge landlord, but I have other things going on, so I can be more flexible," he said. "Not all landlords are as fortunate."

'This is a business'

Atta said some people don't understand how the investment property business works. So when you mix that misunderstanding with the predatory landlords who get attention, you can get an unfair narrative about landlords.

"Like it or not, this is a business," he said. "Property owners are paying increased utility cost and for labor when anything goes wrong or needs updating as well as paying for tools and equipment."

He said no other business is expected to provide a service and get no returns.

"Most of us are good people just trying to make it," he said. "But a small percentage of them make it look bad for all of us."

Atta got into real estate 26 years ago. When he initially got into the business, he was fixing up houses and putting them back on the market, then he started investing in rental properties. Now Opus Corporation serves as a parent company for the investment property business, a construction and remodeling business and wholesale and retail vinyl and aluminum windows business.

Atta said he strives to make sure all his units are in conditions that he would be comfortable living in. He said he gets routine inspections done, communicates often and gives notice of any changes well in advance.

"I believe that anywhere can be a nice place to live," he said.



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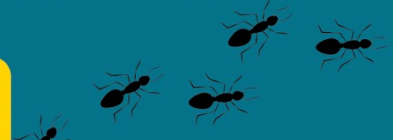
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Upcoming Event

Landlord Lunch and Learn Series

Topic: Tenant background checks; online tools for tenant background checks, better results while saving time and money. Plus monthly Milwaukee Market Update.

When: June 15, 2022, 12:00 PM
Location: Virtual
Cost: AASEW Member - Free
Non-Member - \$10

*This call will be recorded and emailed to all registered participants.

[Register Here](#)



Marcus Auerbach

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Table of Contents:

Page 2 -- President's Corner: Milwaukee rental households deal with rising rent costs

Page 4 -- Why rent prices are rising in Milwaukee

Page 5 -- Could Affordable Housing Reduce City's Racial Disparities?

Page 7 -- AASEW Assisted Legislative Changes

Page 8 -- Back to Basics – Service of the Notice Terminating Tenancy

Page 9 -- We Energies bills may increase; energy emergency possible; no rolling blackouts planned

Page 11 -- Redevelopment of school into affordable housing on Milwaukee's north side hailed as exemplifying HUD initiative

Pages 12-13 -- AASEW Business Member Directory

Page 16 -- Illegal dumping costing Milwaukee County thousands of dollars

Page 18 -- Legit landlords do exist. And Ihsan Atta is trying to prove it.