



Montana State Legislature

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Representative Jonathan Karlen

Minority Whip

House District 98

DURING THE SESSION

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Dear Oak Wood Properties:

We are writing to urge you to prioritize affordability for the residents of Travois Village and Harvey's in Missoula, Montana. While we appreciate that Oak Wood has walked back the proposed \$150 rent hike, we remain deeply concerned about long-term affordability in light of the substantial rent increase last year, the rent increase this year, and fees imposed on residents — especially as several maintenance requests and quality-of-life improvements have gone unaddressed.

After your company recently announced that lot rents would nearly double in the two years since you purchased Travois, we met with over 100 of our constituents who live in the park. These are hardworking Montanans and seniors, many of whom have called the park home for decades. What we heard from them was heartbreaking. Your decision to dramatically increase lot rent was forcing families to make impossible choices: between rent and heart medication, between staying housed or sleeping in their cars through a Montana winter, between caring for loved ones or taking on extra shifts just to make ends meet.

The drastic rent hike was especially troubling given that your website states, "*We strive to make quality living both affordable and accessible*" and "*We are committed to providing affordable housing solutions without compromising on quality.*" We hope that lot rents and service in Missoula's Oak Wood parks will reflect your stated commitment to affordability and quality.

Your recent lot rent hikes far exceed inflation and property tax growth, without a commensurate improvement of critical services. In fact, many residents are now charged a fee to pay their rent, as check payments are no longer accepted — on top of other charges previously included in the lot rent.

As you are certainly aware, residents of manufactured home communities are hit especially hard by large lot rent increases. Many of our constituents have invested their life savings into their homes and face prohibitive costs to relocate them. Large lot rent hikes not only jeopardize their financial stability, but also puts them at risk of losing their homes altogether. Higher lot rent also depresses the resale value of their homes, further limiting their housing options in an expensive market.

We appreciate Oak Wood's decision to reduce the proposed lot rent increase and urge you to prioritize affordability in your Missoula communities.

Sincerely,

Reps. Jonathan Karlen, Bob Carter, Melody Cunningham, Tom France, Shelly Fyant, SJ Howell, Connie Keogh, Marilyn Marler, Mark Thane, Zooey Zephyr

Sens. Willis Curdy, Ellie Boldman, Jacinda Morigeau, Andrea Olsen

Missoula City Council Members: Stacie Anderson, Mirtha Becerra, Daniel Carlino Sierra Farmer, Gwen Jones, Kirsten Jordan, Eric Melson, Mike Nugent, Jennifer Savage, Amber Sherrill

Missoula Mayor Andrea Davis